

EERA Network: 01. Professional Learning and Development

Alternative EERA Network: 10. Teacher Education Research

Exploring the Issue of Second Career Teacher Retention: Toward an Integrative Approach

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National Perspectives: 4

Proposal Information

Over the past twenty years, second career teachers (SCTs) have received a growing interest among researchers and policymakers (Berger & D'Ascoli, 2012). SCTs are teachers with a prior occupation in another profession than teaching. In many countries, the recruitment of SCTs is seen as a solution to face the increasing teacher shortage. The recruitment of SCTs adds a workforce coming from other sectors to the influx of teachers coming from initial teacher training (Baeten & Meeus, 2016). In order to attract SCTs, many countries implemented flexible systems concerning the formal requirements to enter the teaching profession and alternative certification programs emerged to become a teacher (Mathou et al., 2020; Zirkle & Jeffery, 2017).

Despite the increasing demand for attracting SCTs to the teaching profession, research shows that the transition from their previous careers to the school as a workplace is often challenging (Baeten & Meeus, 2016). As a consequence, the attrition rate is particularly high among SCTs and up to twice the attrition rate of first career teachers (Chamber Mack et al., 2019).

Few empirical studies have provided insight into this high attrition rate and more research is needed to better understand the professional integration and retention of SCTs during this early career phase. Additionally, existing research on SCTs often applies a micro-level or individual perspective (Goodwin et al., 2019). The majority of studies focus, for instance, on SCTs' motivations for the career transition, their construction of a new professional identity, their capacity to transfer technical skills to students, or SCTs' job satisfaction. Moreover, since the reality of SCTs is shaped by an interplay of different factors at different levels, we argue that it is necessary to take an integrative approach, which articulates micro-, meso- and macro-level frameworks (Coppe et al., 2020). In particular, how can we explain SCT retention, taking into account the interplay between factors at the individual (micro), organizational (meso), and policy (macro) level?

Through four contributions, the goal of this symposium is to provide an in-depth understanding of the issue of second career teacher retention using an integrative approach. In this symposium, we aim to describe, analyze, and critically reflect upon the (diverse) experienced realities of second career teachers as well as the contextual conditions explaining their realities. The varied national contexts (USA, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany) and entry points situated on a macro- meso- and the micro-level in this symposium will support both theoretically and empirically based reflections on the issue of their retention.

The first presentation describes the realities of SCTs combining macro-, meso-, and micro-level perspectives. This contribution presents a state-to-state comparison of alternative certification program requirements with a specific focus on the challenges of a program in the state of Ohio. The professional development strategies implemented by universities and schools are highlighted as well as the motivations and transition process of SCTs and the retention issue.

The second presentation analyzes the socialization process of SCTs into TVET-schools in French-speaking Belgium by using an organizational perspective. This contribution sheds light on how the school structure shapes the social fabric of teachers' professional interactions and how it may impact novice SCTs' work socialization.

The third presentation articulates meso- and micro-level factors by analyzing the working conditions and motivations of SCTs in Dutch VET-schools as important factors for their professional development and retention.

The fourth presentation focuses on a micro-level and compares motivations, well-being, and intention to stay in the teaching profession between first and second career teachers in Germany.

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Presentations of the Symposium

Business and Industry Professionals Entering Teaching as a Second Career: A Case Study

Chris Zirkle (The Ohio State University)

National perspective: United States

In many states within the U.S., business and industry professionals with sufficient work experience can enter teaching through various alternative certification and licensure pathways. Generally, upon an employment offer, these individuals enroll in some type of alternative certification/licensure program at a college or university where they take courses while they teach in what is known in the U.S., as a teacher in-service programs opposed to more traditional pre-service programs where students complete a program of preparation before teaching. The requirements of these programs can vary widely from state to state and given the current state of teacher shortages in the U.S., can be quite minimal. This aspect will be briefly discussed.

This paper and presentation will focus on one such program in the state of Ohio at a major university. The process of initial employment will be discussed along with the program of preparation provided to these individuals as they make the transition into a secondary education classroom. Professional teaching responsibilities will be described. In addition, based on a recent descriptive research study which involved database searches and personal interviews, the issues surrounding retention of these teachers will also be discussed. The challenges these novice teachers face in the transition process as well as the strategies and professional development provided by the universities and the hiring schools will also be highlighted. Individual motivations for entering the teaching profession (as well as leaving) will be examined.

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Becoming a Second Career Teacher in TVET-School: Or...The Issue of Being Stuck in the Periphery of the School Professional Network

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National perspective: Belgium

Teacher shortage is a recurrent topic addressed by researchers and policymakers (Troesh & Bauer, 2017). In order to tackle this shortage, the past decade has been marked by reflections on second career teachers' recruitment (Berger & D'Ascoli, 2012). Since they are seen as a solution to the growing shortage of teachers, many studies have looked at their motivation to join the teaching profession (Anthony & Ord, 2008). In doing so, the focus is mainly on their attraction and recruitment, leaving aside the issue of their retention (Haim & Amdur, 2016). However, there is evidence in the literature that the attrition rate is particularly high among second career teachers (Redding & Smith, 2016) showing that they are two times more likely to leave the profession than first career teachers during their first years as teachers.

The purpose of this paper is to address the lack of knowledge about the issue of their retention. We pursue the objective of better understanding the process of professional integration of second career teachers by postulating that it is necessary to take into account the specific context of the workplace they enter. To do so, we take an organizational perspective. In this sense, we explore second career teachers' entry into the teaching profession as a work socialization process (Chao, 2012) and we use the theoretical lens of social capital (Bourdieu, 1980) to highlight how the professional network in which they evolve may impact their socialization.

This paper is based on a mixed-methods social network approach and combines qualitative interpretation and quantitative analysis of whole TVET-schools social network (N=2), and qualitative semi-structured interviews with novice second career teachers (N=5).

Results show that TVET-schools are departmentalized organizations in which second career teachers are relegated to the periphery of the school network. Consequently, novice second career teachers have fewer opportunities to have professional interactions and to collaborate with colleagues than first-career teachers. They have less support from peers than first-career teachers and they report that they feel isolated and not really part of the organization. This study argues for the strengthening of professional networks in TVET-schools and the provision of more opportunities for novice second career teachers to become part of the social fabric of the school.

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Second Career Teachers in Dutch Secondary Vocational Education: How Do they Start?

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National perspective: Netherlands

There is a growing need for VET teachers and at the same time a high rate of drop-out among second career teachers. Regarding this retention issue, this contribution analyzes which professional development strategies lead to higher retention rates among beginning second career teachers. Additionally to analyze their development in the first teaching career phase, we also address their motivations to become VET teachers. Both are considered important conditions for retention.

A mixed-method qualitative research design is used, including interviews, 'learner reports', and focus groups. 12 starting second career teachers were followed for 2 years. The first interviews focused on motives for changing career. Learner reports and additional interviews explored their professional development process. The theoretical framework builds with regard to the teacher choice model on Watt & Richardson (2007), Berger & D'Ascoli (2012), Berger & Girardet (2015), Tigchelaar et al (2008), Low et al (2017). Professional development is based on Billett (2001) (Agency and Affordances), Blokhuis (2006), Timmermans (2012) and Van Veldhuizen (2011).

Results indicate that second career VET teachers choose the teaching profession because they see it as a rewarding career, consider the 'return on investment' a risk worth taking, want to develop themselves, and see teaching as a different profession compared with their 'old job'. Professional development in the first years is influenced by the Dutch context e.g. system and team-level. Contextual conditions are illustrated as far as they influence entry, development, and retention. Results indicate that most second career teachers start their teaching career without pre-service training. They have the obligation to qualify as a teacher (pedagogical and didactical skills criteria) within the first two years. Although on a meso-level the policy is to provide every starting second career teacher with a peer / a buddy it is often not the case or difficult to arrange proper conditions (time, appointments). The complexity of the student population has grown over time, so there is a need for pedagogical and didactical skills. The workload is a felt burden and the assignment of tasks is not transparent. Another example of a contextual condition is the policy dynamics. To solve teacher shortage, it is getting common convincing companies to stimulate their employees to consider a part-time position as VET teacher.

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Differences in Motives for Teaching and Well-Being of Alternatively and Traditionally Certified Teachers

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National perspective: Germany

School authorities in many countries are facing widespread and persistent teacher shortages due in large part to high teacher attrition rates (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Sutchter et al., 2019). To address teacher shortages, some countries offer alternative pathways into the teaching profession that allow individuals without a traditional teaching degree to become teachers. This group of teachers is often referred to as alternatively certified teachers (AC teachers). Although increasing numbers of AC teachers are becoming part of the teaching force, little is known about what distinguishes them from traditionally certified teachers (TC teachers).

The present study aims to address this gap in previous research. Using data from a large teacher survey conducted in Germany, we first compared AC and TC teachers' motives for teaching using the "factors influencing teaching choice" (FIT-Choice)

framework developed by Watt and Richardson (2007), a detailed, validated model explaining why individuals chose teaching as a career. Second, we investigated differences in AC and TC teachers' occupational well-being (Aldrup et al., 2018) and their intention to stay in the profession (Watt & Richardson, 2007). The present study is one of the first comparing AC and TC teachers in their motives for teaching, occupational well-being, and intention to stay in the profession.

The findings provide insights into how in-service AC teachers experience their work. The study shows that AC teachers do not possess less favourable characteristics than TC teachers. Based on our findings, we believe that AC teachers can enrich the teaching force.

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