

Why teachers leave: Factors that influence retention and resignation

Gladis Kersaint*, Jennifer Lewis, Robert Potter, Gerry Meisels

University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Ave, EDU162, Tampa, FL 33620-5650, USA

Received 28 September 2005; received in revised form 15 December 2005; accepted 19 December 2005

Abstract

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior is used to examine continuing teachers' plans to remain or resign and the likelihood of resigned teachers to return to teaching in the next 3 years. Specifically, this study examined factors that encourage or hinder resigned teachers from returning to teaching, the importance of such factors, and the importance of those factors for teachers who remained in teaching. We find that family issues are of greatest concern to all teachers, and that leavers place much more emphasis on the time they are able to spend with their families than do stayers. The importance assigned to all factors is influenced by demographic characteristics.

© 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Teacher retention; Teacher persistence; Teacher resignation; Faculty mobility; Educational research

0. Introduction

Teacher shortages, especially in high demand areas such as mathematics, science, and special education, have become a major concern nationally and regionally (Cochran-Smith, 2004; National Commission on Mathematics and Science Teaching for the 21st Century, 2001). A teacher follow-up study has estimated that one third of America's teaching force of nearly 3,500,000 teachers turns over every year (Ingersoll, 2001; National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 2001; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2003). Schools must invest large sums of

money to replace teachers; in Texas alone, that amount is estimated to be at least \$329 million annually (Texas State Board for Educator Certification, 2000). More important even than fiscal costs are instability, last minute hires of under-qualified teachers, inadequate orientation and induction, and the emotional and psychological effects of such change on children that are detrimental to student learning. A substantial portion of the need for new teachers is caused by teacher turnover and attrition, and by a lack of geographic match between supply and demand (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2001). A subsequent report (NCTAF, 2003) called attention to the magnitude and high cost of teachers leaving after only a few years, and referred to it as a "Teacher Retention Crisis."

The total number of vacancies is generated by growth (new positions) and by teachers leaving specific schools (replacement positions or terminations). Those

*Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 813 974 1644;
fax: +1 813 974 3837.

E-mail address: Kersaint@tempest.coedu.usf.edu
(G. Kersaint).

leaving a school may do so voluntarily; this group includes those that resign or retire, or may leave involuntarily because of performance, expiration of temporary certification, reduction in workforce, or for other reasons. Those who resign may move to another teaching position (movers) in the same district (intra-district movers) or in another district (inter-district movers), or leave the teaching profession altogether (leavers). Movers are primarily but not entirely voluntary leavers. Vacancies not filled by movers must be filled with new entrants to teaching or by former teachers returning to the classroom. New entrants may have traditional preparation in a college of education (traditional entrants), or may enter teaching through alternative routes with their college experience in another field or through a career change after a number of years in another profession (alternative entrants). Alternative entrants often teach on temporary certificates until they meet their professional education requirements through university coursework or through school district-provided alternative certification programs. It must be noted, however, that there is overlap among some of these groups, and statistical reports do not always distinguish clearly between them. For example, school-based data collection normally counts vacancies, while district-based collection may not include intra-district movers.

The distribution among these groups varies. NCTAF (2003) defines teacher turnover as the sum of teachers who entered in 1 year and those who left in the immediately following year and suggests that 30% of America's teaching force was in transition in 1999 and 2000. Movers accounted for 46.8% of teachers that left their positions in 2000–2001; 56.6% of vacancies in 1999 were filled with movers, and only 16.0% with newly qualified entrants, (mostly graduates of colleges; Ingersoll, 2000, 2001). Two statewide data sets from Texas (Sparks, 2003) and Florida (Miller, 2002, 2003; Florida Department of Education, 2001, 2002, 2003a, b) illustrate the problem of how data is collected and categorized. In Texas, of the total number of teachers hired, 41% were movers from one district to another (Sparks, 2003). While most of Texas' 1038 districts are very small with average enrollments of less than 4000, the districts in six major metropolitan areas are among the largest in the Nation. Movers from one school to another within each of these large districts are not included in the count, and the percentage of movers in the state must therefore be larger than 41%. The Texas data are consistent with national statistics on

proportion of movers contributing to teacher turnover. Florida requires principals to conduct exit interviews of resigning teachers and the results are collected by districts and provided to the Florida Department of Education (Miller, 2002, 2003), and only teachers leaving a district are included. Many districts in Florida are very large (average district student count is about 37,000, with 6 of the 67 districts enrolling 950,000 students); therefore there is a large unreported fraction of movers who are intra-district movers.

In public schools, attrition (leavers) is greater in small schools rather than in large schools, but otherwise very similar for different types of schools. However, there are almost twice as many movers in high poverty than in low poverty schools. Additionally, there are significantly more movers from small schools rather than from large schools, while movers increase somewhat in the order rural–suburban–urban. Finally, teachers leaving the profession tend to do so early in their career: the retention rate after 5 years is only 61%.

In operational terms, all vacancies are filled by teachers who are new to a school. These new teachers affect continuity, stability, and functioning of the learning community because new working relationships must be established. Vacancies filled by movers typically do not adversely affect student experience as strongly because movers are usually experienced teachers. In contrast, the effectiveness of new entrants is generally lower in the first 2 years as they gain experience (NCTAF, 2003). Also, new entrants coming to teaching via alternative routes often have little or no previous teaching experience and no pedagogical preparation. Their first experience in the classroom may be traumatic for both of them and their students; a significant fraction of such teachers resign before the first semester has ended. There is also concern for long-term effects based on the notion that alternative certification programs may not make up for the lack of several year's preparation and may create teachers that “do not have the fundamental skills needed to support student learning” (Fraser, 2001).

The need for teachers varies not only by geographic region, but also by field taught. Nationally (Ingersoll, 2003) and in Florida (Miller, 2002, 2003) the greatest needs are in mathematics, science, technology, foreign language and exceptional (special) education. This problem is especially severe in mathematics and science where a large fraction of teachers filling vacancies are alternative entrants

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/375002>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/375002>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)