Why teaching? Motivations influencing beginning teachers' choice of profession and teaching practice

Laurie-Ann M. Hellsten
University of Saskatchewan

Michelle P. Prytula
University of Saskatchewan

ABSTRACT

This paper explores why beginning teachers in Saskatchewan chose to enter the profession and the importance of these motivations in their first year as teachers. More specifically, using survey and interview methodologies, the purpose of this study was to: (1) investigate the entry motivations of Saskatchewan beginning teachers; (2) determine if the entry motivations changed over time; and (3) to examine whether there were any differences in motivations due to demographic characteristics. Survey results of 279 beginning teachers suggested that the entry and teacher practice motivation items most frequently identified by the participants as important included "making a difference in people's lives", "working with children or youth", and the "opportunity to teach subjects that were of interest". Motivations did change over time and across demographic characteristics. The importance of "having my own classroom", "salary and benefits", and "professional quality of life" increased from entry motivation to first year teaching motivation. Entry and teacher motivations differed significantly by gender, age group, and program of study. Teacher motivations also differed by marital status. Thematic analysis of 12 interviews resulted in four themes. With the exception of "wanting to be a teacher", interview participants tended to highlight external motivating factors such as "teaching as an alternative option", the influence of "significant others as role model teachers", and teaching as a "good match for skills and interests". The implications of the quantitative and qualitative findings and the relationship of these findings to the extant literature are described further in the discussion.

Keywords: motivation, beginning teachers, teaching profession, teaching practice, teacher retention

INTRODUCTION

Research regarding the recruitment and retention of teachers is on the increase (Ontario College of Teachers, OCT, 2003). Teacher retention is an issue in education (Carroll & Fulton, 2004; Ferriter & Norton, 2004) mainly because teaching has a turnover rate higher than that of most professions (Watts Hull, 2004). Nearly one third of American teachers are in "transition" (migration or attrition) every year (Ingersoll, 2001). Similarly, the OCT has reported massive turnovers in the Canadian teaching population (OCT, 2003) and more than 60% of Ontario school boards have reported problems with teacher retention (Canadian Teachers Federation, CTF, 2000). Although most provinces in Canada have initiatives in place addressing teacher recruitment and retention (CTF, 2004), teacher supply and demand is not homogenous across all regions of Canada (Gervais, Thony, & Maydan, 2001).

Retention of beginning teachers is also of grave concern (Ingersoll, 2001; Watts Hull, 2004). It is estimated that 20-50% of new teachers resign during their first 3 to 5 years of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Suydam, 2002; Villani, 2002; Voke, 2002). This is problematic as teachers typically require 5 to 8 years of experience to master the profession (Scherer, 2001); therefore, classrooms become recurrent training grounds as teachers leave before becoming experts only to be replaced by another set of novices. In Ontario, 19% of beginning teachers are classified as *at risk for leaving* the profession within their first three years (OCT, 2003).

What places beginning teachers at risk for leaving the profession (or not entering the profession at all after their education)? Prior to entering their profession, studies indicate that preservice teachers are idealistic about their future careers (Martin, Chiodo, & Chang, 2001). Although most new teachers indicate they feel prepared for their first year of teaching (McPherson, 2000) and that they intend to remain in the teaching profession (OCT, 2003), the first year of teaching is usually described negatively (Hebert & Worthy, 2001). Beginning teachers are often shaken by their initiation into the teaching profession (Simurda, 2004). Many new teachers enter their first year of teaching with the same teaching load and responsibilities as teachers with many years of seniority (Angelle, 2006) and describe the first three years in the classroom as the most stressful in their teaching careers (Martin et al., 2001). Beginning teachers report an inability to cope and describe being overwhelmed by the demands of the profession (OCT, 2003; O'Neill, 2004). Survey results from Ontario (OCT, 2003) suggest that almost all new teachers in Ontario are dissatisfied with their experiences, teaching assignments, and lack of resources and support (McIntyre, 2004).

In order to understand why so many beginning teachers choose to leave the profession as novices, it is important to examine the reasons why they choose to enter the profession in the first place. It may be possible to identify a range of reasons or entry motivations which could potentially be incorporated into education programs (i.e., through coursework and practice). Entry motivations (Sinclair, 2008; Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006) may impact how long pre-service teachers remain "in their initial teacher education courses and subsequently the teaching profession", and the extent to which they engage with their courses and the profession (Sinclair et al., 2006, p. 1134).

In a recent review, Sinclair (2008) identified ten motivations for becoming a teacher that appeared to be common across studies, genders, ethnicities, and SES. These motivations included: (1) a desire to work with students; (2) a desire to make a difference; (3) teaching as a "calling"; (4) a love of teaching or a particular subject matter; (5) the influence of significant

others; (6) the nature of the work; (7) the perceived benefits of being a teacher; (8) a desire for a career change; (9) the perceived ease of entry into the teaching profession; and (10) the social status that accompanies teaching (Sinclair, 2008). Although valuable, the majority of the research conducted was either dated or situated in the American context (Sinclair, 2008). In order to address these issues, Sinclair conducted a study of the entry motivations of 211 pre-service Australian teachers. Survey results suggested that pre-service teachers were motivated to enter the teaching profession by both internal (i.e., desire to work with children, intellectual stimulation, make a difference, be a leader, and personal and professional development) and external (i.e., desire for a career change, job conditions, nature of teaching work, life-fit, and influenced by significant others) motivations (Sinclair, 2008). Other research suggests that "variations in motivations to teach may exist between different groups of teacher aspirants" (Sinclair et al., 2006, p.1137). Research also suggests that although motivations to teach are likely to change over time "particularly in response to "real-life" teaching experiences" (Sinclair et al., 2006, p.1135), much less is known about how or when entry motivations change (Sinclair et al., 2006). It is possible that the dissonance between what beginning teachers expect the teaching profession to be and the subsequent reality is the underlying root of attrition. Beginning teachers may choose to leave the profession because their "motivations may be insufficient to sustain their involvement in teacher education or practice" following the "reality check" of real teaching experience (Sinclair et al., 2006, p.1134).

This paper explores why beginning teachers in Saskatchewan chose to enter the profession and the importance of these motivations in their first year as teachers. More specifically, using survey and interview methodologies, the purpose of this study was to: (1) investigate the entry motivations of Saskatchewan beginning teachers; (2) determine if the entry motivations changed over time; and (3) to examine whether there were any differences in motivations due to demographic characteristics.

METHODS

Context of the Study

This study is part of the larger "Becoming a Teacher" research program examining the transition experiences of beginning teachers in Saskatchewan, Canada. A mixed-methods design utilizing surveys and in-depth interviews with employed beginning teachers was used to identify the key factors that affect teachers' early career paths. This paper focuses on the entry motivations or reasons why beginning teachers chose the teaching profession and the importance of these motivations in their first year as teachers.

Survey Methods

Beginning teachers who graduated from two universities in Saskatchewan were surveyed one year following graduation (2006 and 2007). Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, entry motivation items (i.e., teachers were asked to reflect on "How important were each of the following factors in your decision to become a teacher?), and teacher practice motivation items (i.e., How important is each of the following factors in motivating you as a teacher today?). Participants were asked to rate ten different motivating influences (nine for

teacher practice items) using a 4 point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) "Not Important" to (4) "Very Important" with a separate "Not Applicable" category.

Quantitative Analysis.

Survey data was entered into SPSS and 100% verified. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the demographic variables as well as both motivation questions. Chi-square tests were conducted to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between participants on the demographic variables which would prevent collapsing across survey year. Independent t-tests and ANOVA's were conducted to determine if there were any statistically significant differences in entry or teacher practice motivations by demographic variables. Dependent t-tests were conducted to determine if there were any statistically significant changes in motivation from entry to first year of teaching.

Case Study Methodology

Participants.

All 2005/2006 education graduates employed as a teacher (including classroom teacher, substitute teacher, etc.) in Saskatchewan were contacted and invited to participate as a case study. Case study participant selection was stratified by pre-service teacher education program (50% secondary and 50% elementary trained), gender (20% male), Aboriginal heritage (20%), and current school location (33% from each of rural, urban, and northern schools). Twelve purposively selected case study participants were included in the final sample. Of these beginning teachers, five teachers (four females, one male) had a secondary education degree and five (four females, one male) had obtained ether an elementary or middle school education degree. Participants represented urban, rural, and northern Saskatchewan locations as well as public and separate school systems. Two additional teachers received their teaching degree from one of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs in Saskatchewan.

Data Collection.

Each beginning teacher case study participant took part in a one-hour interview. Interviews were conducted via telephone with the use of an audio recording device. The interview process was scripted with the questions constructed prior to the interview. The specific question related to this study was: "How did you decide to become a teacher? Who or what influenced your decision? What other career options, if any, did you consider?" Participants were probed for reasons why they might have chosen teaching rather than other options. Transcription software and double verification processes were employed to ensure the accuracy of the transcription taken place during the interview.

Thematic Analysis.

Following the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis was used to identify repeated patterns of meaning from the experiences of the case study participants. The coding of the transcripts and the interpretations made from the codes were "data driven" and

constructed from the "raw information" contained in the transcribed responses to the interview questions (Boyatzis, 1998, p.30-31).

RESULTS

Survey results are presented first followed by the results of the thematic analysis of the interviews. The implications of the quantitative and qualitative findings and the relationship of these findings to the extant literature are described further in the discussion.

Survey Results

Demographic Characteristics.

A total of 279 beginning teachers participated in the survey ($n_{2006/07}$= 126; $n_{2007/08}$= 153; see Table 1 in the Appendix**).** Chi-square analyses at the .01 level demonstrated no statistically significant demographic differences between year of survey completion and thus the samples were collapsed. Approximately three-quarters of the sample were female (n_{Female}=203; n_{Male}=64). Participants ranged in age from 22 years to more than 45 years; however, most participants were between 22 and 35 years of age. About one half of the participants were single while one third of the participants were married. More secondary (45.0%) teachers completed the survey than elementary (36.5%) teachers. Approximately ten percent of the sample graduated from one of the Aboriginal teacher education programs in Saskatchewan.

Motivation Items.

Participant responses to the entry and teacher practice motivation items are presented in Tables 2 and 3 in the Appendix. Regardless of year surveyed, the entry and teacher practice motivation items most frequently identified by the participants as "important" or "very important" factors included "making a difference in people's lives", "working with children or youth", and the "opportunity to teach subjects that were of interest". The three factors least likely to influence participants' decisions to become teachers were "community leadership", "portability of skills for other kinds of work", and "looking for a career change". The three factors least likely to influence participants' current teaching practice were "portability of skills for other kinds of work", "community leadership", and "career opportunities in teaching".

Comparison of Entry Motivations by Demographic Characteristics.

Statistically significant comparisons of entry motivations by demographic characteristics are presented in Table 4 in the Appendix. There were no significant differences in entry motivations by marital status. However, entry motivations differed significantly by gender, age group, and program of study. Female teachers placed significantly more importance on the motivational factors "working with children or youth", "having their own classroom", and "wanting to make a difference in other's lives" than male teachers. Secondary teachers indicated that "the opportunity to teach subjects of interest" significantly influenced their decision to become teachers more than elementary teachers. Teachers 35 years of age and older placed significantly more importance on "looking for a career change" than teachers aged 22 to 24 years

of age. Teachers 35 years of age and older and teachers 25 to 34 years of age also placed significantly more importance on "salary and benefits" than teachers aged 22 to 24 years of age.

Comparison of Practice Motivations by Demographic Characteristics.

Statistically significant comparisons of the motivational factors influencing participants' current teaching practice by demographic characteristics are presented in Table 5 in the Appendix. Teacher motivations differed significantly by gender, marital status, age group, and program of study. Female teachers indicated that "working with children or youth", "wanting to make a difference in other's lives", "having their own classroom", "the portability of teaching skills for other careers", "professional quality of life", and "career opportunities" significantly influenced their current teaching practice more than male teachers. Single, separated, or divorced teachers indicated that "working with children or youth" significantly influenced their current teaching practice more than married or partnered teachers. In contrast, married or partnered teachers placed significantly more emphasis on "salary or benefits" than single, separated, or divorced teachers. Elementary teachers indicated that "working with children or youth" significantly influenced their current teaching practice more than secondary teachers. In comparison, secondary teachers indicated that "the opportunity to teach subjects of interest" significantly influenced their current teaching practice more than elementary teachers. Graduates of Aboriginal teacher education programs placed significantly more importance on the portability of teaching skills than either elementary or secondary teachers. Teachers 35 years of age and older and teachers 25-34 years of age placed significantly more importance on "salary and benefits" than teachers aged 22 to 24 years of age. Teachers 35 years of age and older also placed significantly more importance on "the quality of professional life" than teachers aged 22 to 24 years of age.

Changes in Motivation.

Results of the paired t-tests are presented in Table 6 of the Appendix. The importance of "having their own classroom", "salary and benefits", and "professional quality of life" increased from entry motivation to first year teaching motivation. All other comparisons were not statistically significant.

Case Study Results

Four major themes emerged from the interviews: (1) "always wanted to be a teacher"; (2) "significant others acted as a teacher role model"; (3) "teaching as an alternative option"; and (4) "good match with interests and/or education". Many responses were remarkably similar and most participants spoke to more than one theme (e.g., always wanted to be a teacher and significant others acted as a teacher role model).

Always wanted to be a teacher.

Several participants responded to the question of what motivated them to be a teacher by stating very clearly that it was what they always saw themselves doing. For example, one participant said, "To be completely honest, I have no logical explanation. It's just something I've

always wanted to do ever since I can remember". Similarly a second participant responded, "I don't know, it was just something I always wanted to do", while a third participant said, "I always thought it [teaching] was something I wanted to get into". Another participant expanded on the same idea:

> I have known since I was five that I wanted to be a teacher. I always
> said "I'm going to be a teacher; I'm going to be a teacher" – a French
> Immersion teacher specifically because I went through the French
> Immersion system and I knew it would help me get a job. Everyone
> went "oh, you'll change your mind a million times" and I really
> didn't. I thought about nursing or some other 'helping people'
> professions, but I always knew that that was where my strengths lie,
> was in helping people and I've always loved kids. So, it was just a
> very logical option.

For this participant, "always wanting to be a teacher" was linked to caring for children and her own personal strengths. Some of the participants in this study clearly saw teaching as their "calling".

Significant others acted as a teacher role model.

Several participants spoke about how their significant others were teachers and how these women acted as role models for them in their decision to become teachers. One participant reported, "Well I have an aunt and a sister who are both teachers so that made me more interested. They inspired me". In a similar way a second participant stated, "I have two sisters and a mother who are teachers…" Another participant said, "My sister Samantha is a teacher and she's been with the public system for 18 years. Her daughter just graduated [from teaching] as well about 4 or 5 years ago". For these participants, it seems as if the tradition of teaching has been passed on. As one participant indicated, teaching was a familiar and common family profession. "My mom's a teacher and I volunteered in school and was around them [teachers]… I have other family members who are teachers."

Teaching as an alternative option.

Some participants spoke of how teaching was not in their initial plans but rather a second option if and when their first and preferred choice fell through. For example, one participant chose education after failing to get into the Social Work program.

> I actually considered becoming a social worker. I took about two
> years in that program and I tried to get into the faculty twice and even
> though social workers are required, they're in great demand, I didn't
> get in either time. So, I decided to look at my options of what else I
> could do…

Another participant, in responding to the interviewers' question of whether other career options (besides teaching) were ever considered, replied, "Many, so many. When I was just graduating high school, I actually wanted to go into medicine and first do that. Unfortunately that didn't pan out…". Other participants turned to education as a second career. As one

participant told the interviewer, "I worked for the government before". Another participant replied, "I was in banking for 12 years and I decided to change career paths…"

One participant spoke specifically about the perceived advantages of teaching and how that motivated her to pursue the profession:

> I was really torn when I was applying to university. I actually had two applications in my hand. One to go to the college of Agriculture to become a veterinarian, because I was a farm girl and that's what I always wanted to be. But then it kind of hit me that that wasn't the kind of lifestyle that I wanted. Teacher was kind of the second thing on my list. I just made the decision that that was the lifestyle [teaching] that I wanted- to be home and raise my kids, to be able to be there and watch my kids after school and things like that.

Participants in this study appeared to view the teaching profession as a viable alternative career option.

Good match with interests and/or education.

Some participants identified that education was a good fit for them within the context of their home life and/or personality characteristics. For example, one participant explained the fit between education and family:

> My parents were also really involved with our education and the learning. Even in the community, my dad was on the school board for a number of years and it's kind of been something that was always in the back of my mind I guess.

Another participant spoke to the fit between education, personality, and the job market:

> Originally, when I was in high school and looking at employment options and education opportunities, I had started looking at becoming an EMT, but my father convinced me that I should go to university because I was more of an academic. I've always loved athletics and sports and I thought I'd go through Kinesiology. But I started looking at the employment opportunities and thought, Phys Ed wouldn't be a bad match. I like working with kids, I love coaching, I love teaching, so Phys Ed would be a natural fit for me.

Lastly, another participant noted that it was the location of the program which was a "good fit" rather than the content or type of program itself. "It [the Education degree] was offered in the North and I didn't want to move far from home."

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study are important in that they indicate that Saskatchewan beginning teachers have similar motivations to beginning teachers from other countries. Results from this study are comparable to the ten commonly identified factors summarized in the review by Sinclair (2008). As Sinclair (2008) and Sinclair et al. (2006) suggest, motivations can be classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic in nature. Generally, participants in this study tended to

place more importance on intrinsic motivations. Many of the entry motivations or reasons for entering the teacher profession that were endorsed by participants in the survey portion of this study were also identified by participants in other studies. For example, respondents in this study strongly endorsed "making a difference in others lives", "working with children and youth", and the "opportunity to teach subjects that are of interest". These three internal motivational factors have also been identified by pre-service teachers inside and outside of North America (e.g., Richardson & Watt, 2006; Sinclair, 2008; Sinclair et al., 2006; and Yong, 1995) as being important reasons for pursuing the teaching profession. According to the results of this study, these same three motivations were also the most important motivational factors influencing participants' current teaching practice. Previous research by Young (1999) has also identified the importance of "working with students", "making a difference, and a "love of the teaching subject" to qualified teachers.

Results of this study show that the three least influential entry motivations were "community leadership", "portability of skills for other kinds of work", and "looking for a career change". These external motivations were also identified as being less influential by pre-service teachers in previous research (e.g., Richardson & Watt, 2006, Sinclair, 2008; Sinclair et al., 2006; Allard, Bransgrove, Cooper, Duncan, & Mac, 1995). Similarly, the least important motivational factors influencing participants' current teaching practice were "community leadership", "portability of skills for other kinds of work", and "career opportunities".

Do the motivational factors that influence entry into the teaching profession and teaching practice vary by demographic characteristics? Similar to previous research, this study suggests that demographic variables such as gender (Allard et al., 1995), marital status, age (Sinclair 2006), type of teaching program (i.e., elementary versus secondary; Sinclair, 2008), and ethnicity (Gordon, 1993) impact entry and practice motivations. For example, in this study, Aboriginal teachers graduating from Aboriginal teacher education programs placed much more emphasis on the portability of skills than either elementary or secondary teachers. These findings could impact recruitment strategies and education programming. Education programs may want to consider the use of a multi-dimensional recruitment strategy that tailors recruitment for different genders, types of program, and age groups by focusing on the entry motivations most salient to the respective individuals. Similarly, education coursework and practice could emphasize salient motivations for different programs and ethnicities. Future survey research should also attempt to increase sample size in order to ensure the ability to conduct subgroup and factorial analyses.

Do the motivational factors that influence entry into the teaching profession and teaching practice change over time? Research appears divided. According to Sinclair (2008), entry motivations are stable, at least over a one semester time period. In contrast, Sinclair et al. (2006) found that the importance pre-service teachers placed on "working with children", "worth of teaching", intellectual stimulation", and "helping others" decreased significantly over time and that "ease of entry and work" increased over time. Participants in this study placed more importance on "having their own classroom", "quality of professional life", and "salary and benefits" after graduating and working in the field as a teacher than they did when they entered their teacher education program.

It is interesting to note that in this study, survey respondents and case study participants appeared to respond quite differently to the question of why they chose the teaching profession. Survey participants tended to place the most importance on internal motivations. With the exception of "always wanting to be a teacher", an internal motivation, interview participants tended to speak about external motivations such as the influence of "significant others who acted

as teacher role models", "teaching as a good match with skills and interests", and "teaching as an alternative option". It is quite likely that some of the differences noted were methodological in nature. Unfortunately, the survey format limited the respondents to ten forced choice options and an "other" option. It is possible that many of the survey respondents would have provided more detailed responses had they been provided the opportunity.

Two of the themes arising from the interviews ("always wanting to be a teacher" and "significant others who acted as teacher role models") were also endorsed by participants in other studies including teaching as a "calling" (e.g., Yong, 1995) and "the influence of others" (e.g., Richardson & Watt, 2006). The remaining two themes arising from this study were related to motivations identified by participants in other studies. For example, participants in the Sinclair (2008) study identified "life-fit" as an important motivation for becoming a teacher. Life-fit appears to be similar to "teaching as a good match with interests and/or education". Similarly, interview participants in this study identified education as an "alternative option" while survey participants in the Richardson and Watt (2006) and Sinclair (2008) studies identified "desiring a career change". Although some interview participants in this study did speak to desiring a career change and thereby selecting teaching as a second or alternate career, other participants selected teaching after considering but not actually working in other careers. The finding that some case study participants chose teaching as a career because their first choice career did not "work out" should be studied further. It is possible that some of the beginning teachers who later choose to drop out of the profession are those who do not have a true passion for teaching.

Despite the fact that other research studies (e.g., Allard et al., 1995; Richardson & Watt, 2006, Sinclair, 2008) and the survey participants in this study strongly endorsed "working with children and youth" as an entry motivation, the interview participants did not highlight this factor. Interview participants tended to speak about liking children throughout the interviews but the factor was always on the periphery. In order to guard against teacher attrition, pre-service teachers should be introduced to the culture of Kindergarten-grade twelve schools as soon as possible in their teacher education programs. Similarly, professional teacher colleges should require teacher applicants to be familiar with the culture of schools, perhaps through volunteer experiences. Such experiences should help to ensure that beginning teachers are realistic when envisioning "working with children and youth".

Although worded differently, both the case study participants and the survey respondents (especially secondary teachers) in this study identified the theme "good match with interests" or "opportunity to teach subjects that are of interest" as an important factor in becoming a teacher. This theme appears to align with the "love of teaching subject" factor identified by participants in the Yong (1995) study. Perhaps the common Canadian occurrence of being hired to teach classes outside ones' major/minor (i.e., subject area interests) may be a source of strain for beginning teachers. Such a strain could ultimately lead to attrition or contribute to a decision to leave the teaching profession. Depending upon how strong an influence "good match with interests" or "opportunity to teach subjects that are of interest" had on a person's decision to become a teacher, being required to teach outside one's interest areas could be a deciding factor in leaving the profession. Furthermore, such strain could also be an underlying reason for why surveys such as that conducted in Ontario conclude that many beginning teachers are dissatisfied with their teaching assignments (McIntyre, 2004).

What is also interesting is what the case study participants did not say in their responses. Potential reasons for entering the education profession such as salary and benefits, community leadership, and portability of education skills identified as being important by participants in

other studies (e.g., Richardson & Watt, 2006) as well as by some survey participants in this study (e.g., older teachers, married teachers, and Aboriginal teachers), were not mentioned at all by case study participants in this study. The lack of identification and endorsement of "salary and benefits" as a factor influencing the choice to become a teacher is a meaningful finding. Policy makers sometimes believe that better benefits and higher salaries are attractive enticements to a profession. Results from this study suggests that using external enticements such as salary as the primary recruiting strategy may not be meaningful to all groups of beginning teachers, at least not at this initial stage. Perhaps it is the internal motivations ("making a difference in others lives", "working with children and youth, etc.) that draw new teachers into the profession and enticements such as salary, benefits, and community standing which keep teachers in the profession. Future research should probe interview participants from diverse backgrounds specifically about the importance of these motivations for entry into the profession and the impact of these motivations on teaching practice.

Although this study is based in the Saskatchewan, Canadian context, the findings appear to be similar to results from other contexts. However, this study is limited by the self-reporting nature of the survey as well as the qualitative interview process, both of which could have been hampered by social desirability and the retrospective nature of the questions. It is possible that some beginning teachers may not have felt comfortable sharing entry or practice motivations that were less intrinsic or altruistic in nature. Furthermore, the survey component of this study did not use a true longitudinal design. Rather, employed beginning teachers were first asked to reflect on their entry motivations and later to comment on the impact of these motivations on their current teaching practice. Future research should employ a longitudinal design asking teacher candidates what brought them to the teaching profession early in their education and continue to follow the participants throughout their careers. Such a design would also allow for the study of the motivational factors that impact teacher retention.

Future research should also consider the use of an instrument such as the Motivational Orientations to Teach Survey (MOT-S; Sinclair et al., 2006) or the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice; Richardson & Watt, 2006) to assess reasons why individuals choose to enter the teaching profession. Unfortunately, neither instrument was available for use at the inception of this study. The use of an instrument with evidence of validity and reliability would strengthen the findings and allow for more appropriate comparisons across studies. The FIT instrument provides the added benefit of a comprehensive framework to study teacher entry, practice, and retention motivations.

Appendix

Table 1. Table of survey participants demographic characteristics.

Characteristic	2006/07	2007/08	Combined
Gender			
Female	88 (71%)	115 (80.4%)	203 (76.0%)
Male	36 (29%)	28 (19.6%)	64 (24.0%)
Age			
22-24	50 (40.3%)	72 (47.7%)	122 (44.4%)
25-34	54 (43.5%)	59 (38.6%)	113 (41.1%)
35-44	15 (12.1%)	18 (11.9%)	33 (12.0%)
45+	5 (4.0%)	2 (1.3%)	7 (2.5%)
Marital Status			
Single	58 (46.8%)	87 (58%)	145 (52.9%)
Married	47 (37.9%)	50 (33.3%)	97 (35.4%)
Common Law	14 (11.3%)	11 (7.3%)	25 (9.1%)
Separated	3 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.1%)
Divorced	2 (1.6%)	2 (1.3%)	4 (1.5%)
Program of Study			
Elementary/Middle	54 (42.9%)	27 (27.8%)	81 (36.5%)
Secondary	51 (40.5%)	49 (50.5%)	100 (45.0%)
Aboriginal	15 (11.9%)	11 (11.3%)	26 (11.7%)
Other	5 (4.0%)	10 (10.3%)	15 (5.4%)

Table 2: Motivational factors contributing to survey participants' decision to become a teacher.

Motivations		Not Important		Very Important		Missing/	
		1	2	3	4	NA	Total
Opportunity to teach subjects that interested participant							**Rank = 3**
2006/07	N (%)	3 (2.4)	15 (11.9)	49 (38.9)	57 (45.2)	2 (1.6)	126
2007/08	N (%)	4 (2.6)	14 (9.2)	56 (36.6)	76 (49.7)	3 (2.0)	153
Combined	N (%)	7 (2.5)	29 (10.4)	105 (37.6)	133 (47.7)	5 (1.8)	279
Working with children or young people							**Rank = 2**
2006/07	N (%)	1 (0.8)	3 (2.4)	31 (24.6)	91 (72.2)	0 (0.0)	126
2007/08	N (%)	3 (2.0)	4 (2.6)	36 (23.5)	109 (71.2)	1 (0.7)	153
Combined	N (%	4 (1.4)	7 (2.5)	67 (24.1)	200 (71.9)	1 (0.4)	279
Having own classroom							**Rank = 5**
2006/07	N (%)	13 (10.3)	22 (17.5)	42 (33.3)	49 (38.9)	0 (0.0)	126
2007/08	N (%)	19 (12.4)	24 (15.7)	64 (41.8)	42 (27.5)	4 (2.6)	153
Combined	N (%)	32 (11.5)	46 (16.5)	106 (38.0)	91 (32.6)	4 (1.4)	279
Looking for a career change							**Rank = 10**
2006/07	N (%)	21 (17.5)	13 (10.0)	9 (7.5)	13 (10.8)	70 (54.2)	126
2007/08	N (%)	35 (22.9)	10 (6.5)	13 (8.5)	21 (13.7)	74 (48.4)	153
Combined	N (%)	56 (20.1)	23 (8.2)	22 (7.9)	34 (12.2)	144 (51.6)	279
Making a difference in people's lives							**Rank = 1**
2006/07	N (%)	1 (0.8)	5 (4.0)	14 (11.1)	106 (84.1)	0 (0.0)	126
2007/08	N (%)	1 (0.7)	3 (2.0)	26 (17.0)	117 (76.5)	6 (3.9)	153
Combined	N (%)	2 (0.7)	8 (2.9)	40 (14.3)	223 (79.9)	6 (2.2)	279
Portability of skills for other kinds of work							**Rank = 9**
2006/07	N (%)	20 (15.9)	41 (32.5)	47 (37.3)	14 (11.1)	4 (3.2)	126
2007/08	N (%)	20 (13.1)	47 (30.7)	51 (33.3)	31 (20.3)	4 (2.6)	153
Combined	N (%)	40 (14.3)	88 (31.5)	98 (35.1)	45 (16.1)	8 (2.9)	279
Community leadership opportunities							**Rank = 8**
2006/07	N (%)	15 (11.9)	39 (31.0)	51 (40.5)	18 (14.3)	3 (2.4)	126
2007/08	N (%)	11 (7.2)	51 (33.3)	58 (37.9)	29 (19.0)	4 (2.6)	153
Combined	N (%)	26 (9.3)	90 (32.3)	109 (39.1)	47 (16.8)	7 (2.5)	279
Salary and benefits							**Rank = 7**
2006/07	N (%)	13 (10.3)	32 (25.4)	63 (50.0)	17 (13.5)	1 (0.8)	126
2007/08	N (%)	18 (11.8)	49 (32.0)	61 (39.9)	24 (15.7)	1 (0.7)	153
Combined	N (%)	31 (11.1)	81 (29.0)	124 (44.4)	41 (14.7)	2 (0.7)	279
Quality of professional life							**Rank = 4**
2006/07	N (%)	2 (1.6)	19 (15.1)	62 (49.2)	42 (33.3)	1 (0.8)	126
2007/08	N (%)	5 (3.3)	32 (20.9)	68 (44.4)	46 (30.1)	2 (1.3)	153
Combined	N (%)	7 (2.5)	51 (18.3)	130 (46.6)	88 (31.5)	3 (1.1)	279
Career opportunities in teaching							**Rank = 6**
2006/07	N (%)	8 (6.3)	34 (27.0)	50 (39.7)	33 (26.2)	1 (0.8)	126
2007/08	N (%)	12 (7.8)	39 (25.5)	61 (39.9)	36 (23.5)	5 (3.3)	153
Combined	N (%)	20 (7.2)	73 (26.2)	111 (39.8)	69 (24.7)	6 (2.2)	279

Note. Rank determined by % of respondents selecting 3 or 4 for combined totals with missing/NA results removed.

Table 3: Factors motivating current teachers.

Motivations		Not Important		Very Important		Missing/	
		1	2	3	4	NA	Total
Teaching subjects that interested participant							**Rank = 3**
2006/07	N (%)	5 (4.0)	7 (5.6)	30 (45.2)	57 (78.6)	27 (21.4)	126
2007/08	N (%)	2 (1.3)	9 (5.9)	47 (30.7)	76 (49.7)	19 (12.4)	153
Combined	N (%)	7 (2.5)	16 (5.7)	77 (37.6)	133 (47.7)	46 (16.5)	279
Working with children or young people							**Rank = 2**
2006/07	N (%)	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	26 (20.6)	67 (53.2)	30 (23.8)	126
2007/08	N (%)	1 (0.7)	7 (4.6)	34 (22.2)	93 (60.8)	18 (11.8)	153
Combined	N (%)	2 (0.7)	9 (3.2)	60 (21.5)	160 (57.3)	48 (17.2)	279
Having own classroom							**Rank = 5**
2006/07	N (%)	6 (4.8)	15 (11.9)	24 (19.0)	53 (42.1)	28 (22.2)	126
2007/08	N (%)	2 (1.3)	29 (19.0)	51 (33.3)	52 (34.0)	19 (12.4)	153
Combined	N (%)	8 (2.9)	44 (15.8)	75 (26.9)	105 (37.6)	47 (16.8)	279
Making a difference in people's lives							**Rank = 1**
2006/07	N (%)	1 (0.8)	2 (1.6)	19 (15.1)	75 (59.5)	29 (23.0)	126
2007/08	N (%)	1 (0.7)	2 (1.3)	24 (15.7)	106 (69.3)	20 (13.1)	153
Combined	N (%)	2 (0.7)	4 (1.4)	43 (15.4)	181 (64.9)	49 (17.6)	279
Portability of skills for other kinds of work							**Rank = 9**
2006/07	N (%)	13 (10.3)	35 (27.8)	29 (23.0)	16 (12.7)	33 (26.2)	126
2007/08	N (%)	12 (7.8)	48 (31.4)	45 (29.4)	26 (17.0)	22 (14.4)	153
Combined	N (%)	25 (9.0)	83 (29.7)	74 (26.5)	42 (15.1)	55 (19.7)	279
Community leadership opportunities							**Rank = 8**
2006/07	N (%)	9 (7.1)	38 (30.2)	35 (27.8)	15 (11.9)	29 (23.0)	126
2007/08	N (%)	10 (6.5)	44 (28.8)	58 (37.9)	22 (14.4)	19 (12.4)	153
Combined	N (%)	19 (6.8)	82 (29.4)	93 (33.3)	76 (13.3)	48 (17.2)	279
Salary and benefits							**Rank = 6**
2006/07	N (%)	8 (6.3)	18 (14.3)	36 (28.6)	36 (28.6)	28 (22.2)	126
2007/08	N (%)	8 (5.2)	24 (15.7)	61 (39.9)	40 (26.1)	20 (13.1)	153
Combined	N (%)	16 (5.7)	42 (15.1)	97 (34.8)	76 (27.2)	48 (17.2)	279
Quality of professional life							**Rank = 4**
2006/07	N (%)	2 (1.6)	11 (8.7)	41 (32.5)	43 (34.1)	29 (23.0)	126
2007/08	N (%)	4 (2.6)	15 (9.8)	63 (41.2)	51 (33.3)	20 (13.1)	153
Combined	N (%)	6 (2.2)	26 (9.3)	104 (37.3)	94 (33.7)	49 (17.6)	279
Career opportunities in teaching							**Rank = 7**
2006/07	N (%)	7 (5.6)	22 (17.5)	40 (31.7)	28 (22.2)	29 (23.0)	126
2007/08	N (%)	10 (6.5)	31 (20.3)	62 (40.5)	31 (20.3)	19 (12.4)	153
Combined	N (%)	17 (6.1)	53 (19.0)	102 (36.6)	59 (21.1)	48 (17.2)	279

Note. Rank determined by percentage of respondents selecting 3 or 4 for combined totals with missing and N/A results removed.

Table 4. Entry motivation comparisons by demographic characteristics.

Motivation	Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	Statistic	p-value	Post-hoc Direction
Work with kids								
	Male	64	3.44	0.75	83[a]	-2.97	.004	F>M
	Female	202	3.74	0.52				
Own Classroom								
	Male	64	2.72	1.02	261	-2.15	.032	F>M
	Female	199	3.02	0.94				
Make a difference								
	Male	64	3.61	0.73	78[a]	-2.32	.023	F>M
	Female	197	3.83	0.44				
Interesting subject								
	Elementary	79	3.05	0.77	3, 214	4.72	.003	S>E
	Secondary	99	3.47	0.76				
Salary/benefits								
	22-24	120	2.43	0.93				
	25-34	113	2.73	0.79	2, 270	6.35	.002	35+ and 25-34 > 22-24
	35+	40	2.63	0.87				
Career change								
	22-24	57	1.95	1.11	2, 130	3.79	.025	35+>22-24
	35+	23	2.74	1.28				

Note. [a] indicates equal variances were not assumed.
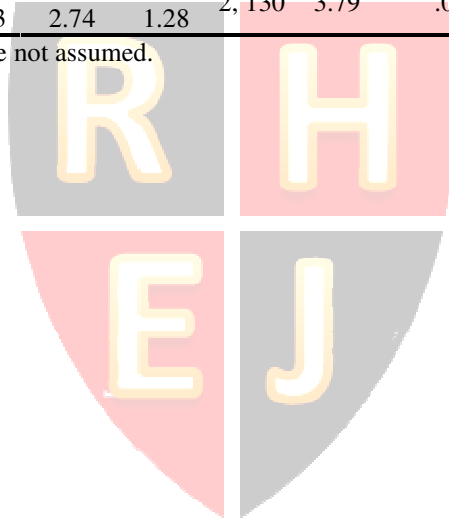
Table 5. Practice motivation comparisons by demographic characteristics.

Motivation	Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	Statistic	p-value	Post-hoc Direction
Work with kids								
	Male	52	3.40	0.67	75 [a]	-2.98	.004	F>M
	Female	171	3.71	0.57				
Own classroom								
	Male	53	2.87	0.92	222	-3.17	.002	F>M
	Female	171	3.29	0.82				
Make a difference								
	Male	51	3.49	0.76	59 [a]	-3.02	.004	F>M
	Female	171	3.82	0.41				
Portability								
	Male	52	2.31	0.88	214	-2.36	.019	F>M
	Female	164	2.65	0.91				
Quality of life								
	Male	52	2.94	0.83	221	-3.44	.001	F>M
	Female	171	3.34	0.70				
Career opportunities								
	Male	52	2.60	0.98	75 [a]	-2.65	.018	F>M
	Female	171	2.96	0.83				
Work with kids								
	Single	130	3.72	0.47				
	Married	98	3.52	0.74	154 [a]	2.39	.018	Single>M
	Married	98	3.68	0.60				
Salary/benefits								
	Single	131	2.89	0.89	227	-2.45	.015	M>Single
	Married	98	3.17	0.86				
Work with kids								
	Elementary	61	3.77	0.42	3, 173	4.38	.005	E>S
	Secondary	82	3.44	0.70				
Interesting subject								
	Elementary	61	3.25	0.79	3, 175	4.38	.005	S>E
	Secondary	82	3.62	0.68				
Portability								
	Elementary	56	2.55	0.93				
	Secondary	81	2.52	0.91	3, 168	3.33	.021	A>E and A>S
	Aboriginal	23	3.17	0.83				
Salary/benefits								
	22-24	106	2.78	0.95				
	25-34	92	3.17	0.77	2, 227	6.48	.002	35+ and 25-34 > 22-24
	35+	32	3.25	0.88				
Quality of life								
	22-24	105	3.10	0.86	2, 226	5.28	.006	35+ > 22-24
	35+	32	3.56	0.50				

Note. [a] indicates equal variances were not assumed.

Table 6. Paired comparison between entry and practice motivations.

Motivation	Variable	Mean	SD	n	t-statistic	p-value
Interesting subject						
	Entry	3.33	0.75	228	-1.64	.103
	Practice	3.44	0.76			
Work with kids						
	Entry	3.67	0.58	230	0.81	.418
	Practice	3.63	0.60			
Own classroom						
	Entry	2.92	0.97	228	-3.91	.000**
	Practice	3.18	0.87			
Make a difference						
	Entry	3.78	0.54	225	0.77	.444
	Practice	3.75	0.53			
Portability						
	Entry	2.50	0.95	220	-1.21	.228
	Practice	2.59	0.92			
Leadership						
	Entry	2.68	0.86	225	0.19	.851
	Practice	2.66	0.84			
Salary/benefits						
	Entry	2.62	0.87	229	-5.84	.000**
	Practice	3.02	0.89			
Quality of life						
	Entry	3.09	0.79	228	-2.55	.011*
	Practice	3.25	0.75			
Career opportunities						
	Entry	2.83	0.90	227	-0.90	.367
	Practice	2.90	0.87			

Note. * significant at the .05 level; ** significant at the .01 level.

REFERENCES

Allard, A., Bransgrove, E., Cooper, M., Duncan, J., & MacMillan, M. (1995). Teaching is still a good job for a woman: The influence of gender on career and life choices. *South Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 23,* (2), 185–194.

Angelle, P.S. (2006). Instructional leadership and monitoring: Increasing teacher intent to stay through socialization. *NASSP Bulletin, 90,* 318-334.

Boyatzis, R.E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2)*,* 77-101.

Canadian Teachers Federation (2000). Demographics of the Teaching Profession: The Changing Nature of Teaching in Canada - Conference Report, Author. Retrieved October 12, 2005 from website: http://www.ctf-fce.ca/en/default.htm?main.htm

Carroll, T. & Fulton, K. (2004). The true cost of teacher turnover. *Threshold, Spring,* 16- 17.

Ferriter, W. & Norton, J. (2004). Creating a culture of excellence. Listening to the experts: Experienced teachers describe the school working conditions that most affect their decisions to stay or leave. *Threshold, Spring,* 18-21.

Gervais, G., Thony, I., & Maydan, V. (2001). The supply and demand of elementary-secondary educators in Canada. *Presentation at the 2001 Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda Symposium Teacher Education/Educator Training: Current Trends and Future Directions*, Quebec City.

Gordon, J. A. (1993). *Why did you select teaching as a career? Teachers of color share their stories.* East Lansing, MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.

Hebert, E. & Worthy, T. (2001). Does the first year of teaching have to be a bad one? A case study of success. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17,* 897-911.

Ingersoll, R.M. (2001). A different approach to solving the teacher shortage problem. *Teaching Quality Policy Briefs.* Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy. depts.washington.edu/ctpmail.Briefs.html

Ingersoll, R.M., & Smith, T.M. (2003). The wrong solution to the teacher shortage. *Educational Leadership, 60,* 30-33.

Martin, L. A., Chiodo, J. J., & Chang, L. (2001). First year teachers: Looking back after three years. *Action in Teacher Education, 23*, (1), 55-61.

McIntyre, F. (2004). New teachers thriving by third year. *Professionally Speaking, December,* http://www.oct.ca/en/CollegePublications/PS/december_2003/reports.asp

McPherson, S. (2000). *From practicum to practice: Two beginning teachers' perceptions of the quality of their preservice preparation*. Unpublished master's thesis. Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

O'Neil, L.M. (2004). Support systems: quality induction and mentoring programs can help recruit and retain excellent teachers and save money. *Threshold, Spring,* 12-15.

Ontario College of Teachers. (2003). *New teacher induction: Growing into the profession.* Toronto: Author.

Richardson, P.W., & Watt, M.G. (2006). Who chooses teaching and why? Profiling characteristics and motivations across three Australian universities. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 34,* (1), 27-56.

Scherer, M. (2001). Improving the quality of the teaching force: A conversation with David C. Berliner. *Educational Leadership, 58,* (8), 6-10.

Simurda, S.J. (2004). The urban/rural challenge: Overcoming teacher recruitment and retention obstacles faced by urban and rural school districts. *Threshold, Spring,* 22-25.

Sinclair, C. (2008). Initial and changing student teacher motivation and commitment to teaching, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 36,* (2), 79-104.

Sinclair, C., Dowson, M., & McInerney, D. (2006). Motivations to teach: Psychometric and longitudinal perspectives. *Teachers College Record, 108*, (6), 1132–1154.

Suydam, J. (2002). Teacher shortage worsening in Texas: More uncertified educators will be needed to fill the gap, research shows. *Austin American Statesman, May 28,* p.A-1.

Villani, S. (2002). *Mentoring Programs for New Teachers: Models of Induction and Support.* Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press Inc.

Voke, H. (2002). Understanding the teacher shortage. *ACSD InfoBrief, 29,* 1-17.

Watts Hull, J. (2004). Filling in the gaps: Understanding the root causes of the teacher shortage can lead to solutions that work. *Threshold, Spring,* 8-12, 15.

Yong, B.C.S. (1995). Teacher trainees' motives for entering into a teaching career in Brunei Darussalam. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 11*, (3), 275–280.

Yong, B.C.S. (1999). The career commitment of primary teachers in Brunei Darussalam: Perceptions of teaching as a career. *Research in Education, 62,* 62-70.