

Employment aspirations of newly qualified teachers: A case study of the 2002 cohort from a regional Australian university.

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Abstract

Contemporary beginning teachers have a diverse mix of ages and prior experiences and many are seeking teaching work beyond their own state in a rapidly changing national and international market. The purpose of this descriptive study is to investigate the initial and medium term employment aspirations and realistic expectations of a cohort of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) just prior to their entry into the teaching workforce. The case study is a sample of 174 beginning teachers from a regional Australian university.

Introduction

The purpose of the first phase of this descriptive inquiry is to investigate the initial and medium term employment aspirations of a cohort of beginning or newly qualified teachers (NQTs) just prior to their entry into the teaching workforce. The longer term objective of the research is to track a smaller sample from this cohort through their emerging career paths.

Two theoretical frameworks

Young (1995) reviews two of the competing theories for occupational selection that will help frame this paper. Holland's (1973) theory of careers suggests vocational and careers choices are made by individuals based on the fit between their perception of their personality and the job environment. This view contrasts with the market-responsive model Ochsner & Solomon (1979) where individuals make occupational choices based on demand and the level of compensation. The analysis will explore the extent to which these theories are reflected in the reported changes over time in NQT expectations.

Recent models of teacher and NQT development have focused on confidence and competency Martinez (1992) and (1992). Martinez challenges the developmental or stage theory of teacher development. Ryan uses Martinez's (1992) critique of in her case study of a teacher five years after completing a Diploma in Teaching. The study focuses on the confidences and competencies of the teacher rather than concerns and views about survival in the classroom. Leong's (1999) study of the 'plight of novice music teachers' and Lang's (1999) "When does it get any easier", a study of seven year one teachers in New Zealand uses stage theory to underpin the inquiry. McCormack and Thomas (2001) argue from their research on beginning PDHPE [Personal Development, Health and Physical Education] teachers that a clearer understanding of their aspirations and concerns will strengthen initial teacher and teacher induction programs. The current study will explore the perceptions of confidence and confidence as well as any concerns they have of their emerging careers.

Context: Is there a teacher shortage?

The demand and supply for primary and secondary teachers at both the national and state levels has been an issue of ongoing debate. The Australian Council of Deans of Education (Preston, 1999) has argued that a significant shortfall in the numbers of teachers was likely. The unions have subsequently argued the case for increasing the attractiveness of teaching in a number of wage negotiations. The Conference of Education System Chief Executive Officers' (CESCEO) (1998) draft study counters these projections and report that nationally there was "sufficient supply for both primary and secondary teachers should be available to meet the expected slight increase in demand for teachers over the period 1998 to 2001" (p.i). The growth in demand in both reports will come in part from increased retention in the upper secondary, shortages in particular secondary specialisations [Mathematics & Sciences, IT, LOTE and PE], strong growth in non-government enrolments [often with reduced class size ratios] and some reduction in average class size in the early primary grades. Ramsey (2000) in the NSW context has recommended to the NSW Government that it make representations to the National Council of Ministers of Education (MCEETYA) to establish a joint working group for the development of medium and long-term projections of national teacher supply and demand (Ramsey (2000), Recommendation 11). Such a proposal Ramsey argues could join the thinking and resources of both groups in this ongoing debate.

A background paper by Ainley and Underwood [2003] in the recently released Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education [October 2003] identified several conclusions. Several are highlighted:

- ?? There are a number of uncertainties involved in projections of both the supply and demand for teachers.
- ?? The projected deficit in supply is much more an issue for secondary than primary schools.
- ?? New and improved data collection and qualitative research is required.
- ?? Policy directions need to take account of teacher mobility, changing career expectations and competition from other sectors.
- ?? Teaching now has a global market, at least among English-speaking countries.[pp 96-97]

NSW teacher employment context

The mid 1990s was characterized by an oversupply of primary teachers in NSW. There is some debate as to whether the suggested pool of over 15,000 teachers in 1997 (CESCEO, p.36) working outside education or not employed were effectively available in the specialisations and areas where vacancies occur. However the 1998 report suggests that the labour market for primary teachers will continue to be in oversupply in NSW with some difficulties in recruiting for some remote locations. In secondary the projected shortages in TAS [Technology and Applied Studies] and the Sciences and Mathematics have prompted the initiation of special programs. The decline in the availability of casual relief would appear to be the most pressing issue in NSW, despite recent initiatives.

Ramsey (2000) argues that while initial supply can be in part be predicted, projecting demand is much more difficult and sensitive to government policy decisions, population cycles, retention rates, overseas and interstate teaching and non-teaching employment opportunities and changing resignation rates of the aging teaching workforce. On balance Ramsey argues

that the “supply is tightening” and all school sectors either by location for primary teachers or secondary specialisation are having difficulty in attracting quality teachers.

Two sub-questions have framed the design and reporting of this inquiry:

1. What gaps exist between beginning teachers’ preferred employment aspirations and their realistic expectations for the type, sector and location of teaching work?
2. What factors influence NQTs initial and medium term professional aspirations?

Variations in employment aspirations between students by gender and their different pre-service programs will be systematically covered in the analysis.

Method

A descriptive design using a survey with a combination of closed and open-ended items was used for the first phase of this study. A pilot survey was developed from issues identified from practice, Young’s (1995) perspective and question ideas from the career aspirations section of a survey developed by Yarrow et al (1995) in a Queensland study of final year pre-service teachers. The draft survey was piloted with a small number of final year students to check the format and time taken. Subsequently the questions were critiqued by teacher education colleagues and a senior researcher officer in the NSW Department of Education and Training.

The biographical questions in the survey sought data about the respondents; gender, age, program, relationship status, dependents, work experiences prior and during their studies. Eleven employment and professional aspiration questions focused on the level [primary, secondary or tertiary], location [local, interstate and overseas] system [government/non government] and mode of teaching [permanent, part-time or casual] they hoped to achieve. The questions were framed in terms of “in the next 1 to 2 years” and “in 3 to 5 years” they’d prefer and expect to be located. Two open-ended questions asked the respondents to describe the “factors influencing their professional aspirations” and the more general “influences on their immediate and medium term plans”. The survey had an attached confidential and coded invitation to participate in a follow-up interview. All the data collection was completed in the final week of the students on-campus program in November 2002.

Respondents

Preservice programs

A sample of 174 final year students completed the survey from the Faculty of Education’s four pre-service programs [Table 1]. Approximately 50 per cent of the students in the four year Bachelor of Education in Secondary PDHPE and Primary Education completed the survey. Thirty per cent of the students in each of the one year Diploma in Education (represented by 44 per cent primary and 56 per cent secondary methods) and the three year Bachelor of Teaching [primary and early childhood education] participated. The gender balance [120 females and 54 males] was representative of the gender balance in each of the program areas except from ECE [Early Childhood Education] where the only two males participated.

Table 1 Respondent numbers by program, gender and representation in the sample.

	Diploma in Education	Secondary PDHPE	Bachelor of Education (Primary)	Bachelor of Teaching (Primary & ECE)	Total
Male	21	17	8	8	54
Female	40	17	24	39	120
Total	61	34	32	47	174
No. in program	200	65	70	158	493
%	30	52	50	30	35%

For the second phase of the study 45 per cent [79] of the NQTs in the sample gave their contact details and permission for a follow-up interview. It is anticipated these interviews will be completed at the end of 2004.

Age

Diploma in Education NQTs had completed an undergraduate program prior to their one year professional program. The group included a number of Canadian students. Their ages were the most widely distributed in the sample with 57 per cent being 26 years of age or more. The Bachelor of Teaching students were evenly distributed between the 20-25 and 26 and above age categories. The PDHPE beginning teachers were predominately 20 to 22 with only two over 25 years of age. Overall the majority of the beginning teachers were female and under 25. However there was, surprisingly, a higher proportion of mature aged males [38%] compared to females [28%] in the 29 plus age group by gender.

Relationship status and dependants

Of those responding to this question 41 per cent indicated they were in a long term relationship. Females were slightly less likely to be single [57%] than the male NQTs [64%] in the sample. The percentage of single respondents by program was highest for the PDHPE group [90%], the B.Ed. group at 75 per cent, the Diploma in Education 57 per cent and lowest for the Bachelor in Teaching group [28%].

While 79 per cent of the final year students reported no dependents, the males were more likely [32%] than the women [24%] to have a dependent at the end of their pre-service program. Half of the Bachelor in Teaching group reported a dependent, 30 per cent of the Diploma NQTs and only 6 per cent of the secondary PDHPE beginning teachers reported they had a dependent.

Prior work experience

Just over one third [36%] of the sample had full time work prior to their pre-service teacher education program. Males [66%] were about twice as likely to have had prior work

experience than the females respondents [36%]. Two out of the three [66%] of the NQTs completing the Diploma had full time work prior to their one year of professional education studies and for half this number it was for between five and twenty years of prior work experience. At the other end of the experience spectrum only 27 per cent of the PDHPE group had full time work prior to their teacher education program and for six of the eight it was for just one year.

Males had predominately worked in the manufacturing and building, sports and recreation, education, hospitality and health sectors. Women had their prior work experience in education, health, retail, sports and recreation and hospitality. The range of prior work experiences for the sample covered more than twenty occupations.

Study and work

Overall 68 per cent of the final year students reported that they had part-time work during their education studies. A slightly higher proportion of men [71%] than women [66%] reported that they had worked part-time. The data is quite varied by program. While 94 per cent of the PDHPE and Bachelor of Education [Primary] NQTs reported they had worked regularly during their program only 52 per cent of the Diploma program and 58 per cent of the Bachelor in Teaching beginning teachers indicated that they had worked part-time during their course.

The lower level of participation in part-time work by the Diploma in Education group is in part explained by number of international students and full scholarship holders in that program. The Bachelor in Teaching group has a higher proportion of 24 year old plus female NQTs who have dependents. There were also a number of qualified teachers in the Bachelor of Education [Primary] program completing their fourth year as part-time students who reported working during the year of the study.

When the Bachelor of Education [Primary] NQTs are excluded the most frequently cited part-time work was in rank order; hospitality, retail, education, sport/recreation, health, manufacturing and entertainment. For the PDHPE beginning teachers sport/recreation and hospitality predominated. Education, retail and hospitality for the Diploma group and hospitality and retail for the Bachelor in Teaching group.

Findings

The findings are structured using the two sub-questions identified in the introduction.

1. What gaps exist between beginning teachers preferred employment aspirations and their realistic expectations for the type, sector and location of teaching work?

In the final weeks of their pre-service program 95 per cent of the beginning teachers [n = 174] had an aspiration to be teaching in 2003. In three to five years the aspiration slipped one per cent to 94 per cent, however just under 20 per cent of the original sample did not respond to the latter section of this question.

Only two per cent of males and five per cent of females did not aspire to work as teachers in the next one to two years. In three to five years six per cent of males and four per cent of females reported that they didn't aspire being teachers. A smaller proportion of women responded to this sub-question may indicate the likelihood that female NQTs are more likely to be not seeking work as teachers in three to five years.

The aspiration rate varied from zero for the B.Teach. group to seven percent for NQTs in the Diploma and PDHPE programs during the initial one to two years. PDHPE [10%] and B.Ed. teachers [15%] were the ones most likely not to aspire for teaching work in three to five years.

Type of teaching

A significant disparity exists between beginning teachers type of work preference and their realistic expectations both initially and in the medium term by program [Tables 2a and 2b] and gender [Tables 3a and 3b].

Table 2a NQTs preferred teaching choice by program of study [N=174]

Program	Casual %		Part-time %		Full time %	
	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs
Dip. Ed.	16	12	16	9	68	79
PDHPE	43	7	11	4	46	89
B. Ed.	6	4	13	0	81	96
B. Teach.	17	6	18	3	65	91
Total	20	7	15	5	65	88

Table 3a NQTs preferred teaching choice by gender [N=173]

Program	Casual %		Part-time %		Full time %	
	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs
Male	22	5	10	5	68	90
Female	19	7	17	7	64	86
Total	20	7	15	5	65	88

Across the full sample, a third of the NQTs prefer casual or part time work in the first one to two years with 65 per cent aspiring for full time work [Table 2a]. A majority [88%] of NQTs are aspiring for full time work by the third to fifth year following their university program. As some of the B.Ed. Primary teachers already had year long blocks their expectations for full time work was the highest [81%]. Two thirds of Diploma in Education and B. Tech. beginning teachers were hoping for full time work. However less than half [46%] of the PDHPE NQTs were hoping for full time work.

Table 2b NQTs realistically expected teaching opportunities by program of study [N=126]

Program	Casual %		Part-time %		Full time %	
	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs
Dip. Ed	53	26	11	7	36	67
PDHPE	7	11	58	11	32	78
B. Ed.	42	19	10	4	48	77
B. Teach.	66	21	14	9	20	70
Total	48	20	20	8	32	72

There is strong view amongst primary program NQTs [Table 2b] that they are unlikely to get full time employment in the first two years. This has been the experience in primary education in particular in NSW over the last decade.

The ideal teaching expectations of male and female NQTs were mostly the same except the female beginning teachers had a stronger preference for part-time work immediately after graduation [Table 3a]. While the realistic expectations between the men and women for initial casual work were comparable 53/54 per cent [Table 3b], the female beginning teachers were more pessimistic than males after two years [30% to 43%]. After three to five years female beginning teachers [68%] were much more doubtful compared to the males [%] at securing full-time work.

Table 3b NQTs realistically expected teaching opportunities by gender [N=126]

Program	Casual %		Part-time %		Full time %	
	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs	1-2 Yrs	3-5 Yrs
Male	53	15	6	5	43	80
Female	54	22	16	10	30	68
Total	54	20	12	8	34	72

A sense of pessimism for teacher employment was reflected in the samples 'realistic expectations' of working as a teacher [Table 2b and 3b]. For the 126 respondents in the sample who completed this question, there was a significant dissonance between their preferred situation and their perception of the employment realities. Only two thirds [68%] of the female NQTs expect be able to secure full-time work after five years. Initially the female sample perceived there was only a 54 per cent [Table 3b] chance of securing a full time job as a teacher in the first two years after training. The apprehension was greatest for female primary teachers after a Bachelor of Teaching.

Non-teaching options

Given the general pessimism expressed by many final year students about securing work as a teacher, the study explored the non teaching employment aspirations the students had initially and three to five years after completing their program.

Over a quarter [28%] indicated they could be working in another industry [Table 4]. The Diploma in Education group [26%] were the most likely to be lost from teaching. Another quarter of the sample indicated they could be travelling. This was particularly evident for the PDHPE group where 41 per cent reported they had a desire to initially travel. Continuing study was the third ranked non-teaching option. Students in the Bachelor of Teaching program [24%] have the option for a full or part-time 4th year pass or a full time honours program. The other options ranged through life's great tapestry! [Table4] These individual options not shown in Table 4 included; enjoying time to myself, doing voluntary work, divorced, being an actress & performing, playing music/a rock star and on my honeymoon.

Table 4 Frequency of major non teaching options in the next 1 to 2 years by program [120 responses]

If not teaching I'm likely to be...	Dip. Ed.	PE-Health	B. Ed. (Pr.)	B.Teach (Pr & ECE)	Total	Rank	%
<i>No. NQTs by program</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>174</i>		
Working in another industry	16	4	5	9	34	1	28
Travelling	8	14	5	5	32	2	27
Continuing studying	4	0	5	8	17	3	14
Bankrupt/broke/dead/very skinny/married someone rich	2	0	1	6	9	4	8
Related area to education	1	4	1	2	8	5	7
Looking after/starting family	4	1	0	0	5	6	4
Private tuition/tutoring	3	0	0	1	4	7	3

There were some gender differences in the ranking of the initial non-teaching options. While there was an equal likelihood of males and females seeking work in another industry [29%], males were more likely than the women to travel [29% to 22%] and women were more likely to continue to study [17% to 9%]. The later data relates in part to the number of women in the Bachelor of Teaching [Table 4]. Males were more likely to seek work in an education related industry [9%] while the women reported that they could be 'bankrupt, broke, dead, very skinny or married to someone rich' [8%]!

In three to five years a much smaller number of responses [67] were recorded for non-teaching choices. By rank, working in another industry was the highest [36%], travelling and looking after or starting a family ranked equal second [13% each] and working in an education related area was fourth [12%]. Men were more likely than women [55% to 34%] to be working in another industry. Women were now more likely to travel [17% to 10%] and work in an education related area [17% to 5%].

Seventy three per cent of the PDHPE NQTs who responded to this question reported that they were likely to be working in another industry in three to five years. The other programs followed the wider sample trends on their non-teaching options.

Level of teaching

The preferred level of teaching in the first one to two years essentially followed the preschool [1%], primary [57%] or secondary [35%] focus of the NQT's pre-service programs [Table 5]. There was some interest [7%] in tertiary teaching options.

Table 5 Level of teaching preference in the next 1 to 2 years

Preferred level of teaching:	Total %		Males %		Females %	
	1-2 Yrs [N=173]	3-5 Yrs [N=134]	1-2 Yrs [N=54]	3-5 Yrs [N=41]	1-2 Yrs [N=119]	3-5 Yrs [N=93]
Primary	57	52	38	39	67	58
Secondary	35	37	51	51	28	31
Tertiary	7	9	11	10	4	9
Preschool	1	2			1	2

Three to five years on there was a small shift by a small number of respondents toward secondary and tertiary teaching. For women there was a slight shift out of primary [67% to 58%] toward secondary [28 % to 31%] and a doubling of their interest in teaching at the tertiary level [4% to 9%].

The program specialisation data indicated a movement after three to five years for the Diploma of Education NQTs from primary toward tertiary, PDHPE from secondary toward primary and the B.Ed.primary NQTs toward secondary and tertiary teaching options.

Sector of teaching

The initial preference of the beginning teachers was government [46%], non government schools [24%] with 30 per cent not concerned [Table 6]. After three to five years there was an overall shift in the sample from non-government to a not concerned preference for a teaching appointment. Half of the male beginning teachers preferred a government position [50%] over both time periods. Their preference for a non-government position fell [23% to 10%] and 40 per cent were 'not concerned' where they taught after graduation.

The female NQTs became less concerned [32% to 43%] about the school sector they worked in after three to five years [Table 6]. Fewer women would specifically prefer work in a non-government or a government school.

Table 6 In which sectors did the NQTs prefer to teach?

Preferred teaching sector	Total %		Males %		Females %	
	1-2 Yrs [N=171]	3-5 Yrs [N=170]	1-2 Yrs [N=52]	3-5 Yrs [N=41]	1-2 Yrs [N=119]	3-5 Yrs [N=92]
Government	46	42	50	50	43	38
Not concerned	30	42	27	40	32	43
Non-government	24	16	23	10	25	19

For those 52 respondents seeking an initial non-government school placement there was 50/50 split between the independents and the Catholic schools. This did not appear to change three to five years on. Female NQTs seeking a non-government option had a slight initial preference for a Catholic school. There was no difference in the choice pattern after five years. Two thirds of the male beginning teachers in this category had a preference for an independent school. This preference became unanimous for the small number reporting a sector preference after three to five years.

Location preferences

In the initial two year period 70 per cent of the NQTs reported a preference to teach in NSW [Table 7]. Interest in working in NSW declined to 57 per cent over the three to five period. Teaching overseas preferences increased from 19 per cent to nearly a quarter [23%] of the cohort in the medium term. Those seeking an interstate placement doubled to 13 per cent as well as those who were unconcerned about where they taught. Queensland and the ACT were the most popular interstate locations. Victoria did not score a mention!

Table 7 Preferred teaching location

Preferred location	Total %		Males %		Females %	
	1-2 Yrs [N=170]	3-5 Yrs [N=109]	1-2 Yrs [N=53]	3-5 Yrs [N=32]	1-2 Yrs [N=116]	3-5 Yrs [N=76]
NSW	70	57	69	55	70	57
Overseas	19	23	16	16	25	25
Interstate	7	13	6	11	3	6
Unconcerned	4	7	9	18	2	12

The proportion of women who had a preference to work overseas remained constant. Women became more interested in an interstate work [3% to 6%] and just under half were less concerned about the sector of the school they would teach in the three to five years [Table 6].

The males teachers had a lower but steady interest [16%] in working overseas, reported an increased interest in teaching interstate [6% to 11%] and became more flexibility about where they worked [9% to 18%].

The Diploma in Education NQTs demonstrated the greatest preference to work overseas. Interest in working overseas rose from 35 per cent to 63 per cent in three to five years. This program had a small percentage of Canadian international students. Unfortunately the survey did not request information on the student's country of origin. The other program NQTs varied between 14 per cent [PDHPE] to 20 per cent for the [primary] program teachers with an overseas work preference in both time periods.

UK [36%], Canada [17%] – particularly for females, Japan [8%] and USA [8%] were the top four international nations. There was also interest in the other countries in East Asia and continental Europe.

2. What factors are influencing NQTs initial and medium term professional aspirations?

There were a wide range of personal and professional considerations influencing NQTs professional aspirations reported through this open ended question. The projected rank of the top 12 [of approximately 30] change factors through the first five years of these beginning teachers' experience are detailed in Table 8.

Initially the beginning teachers cited a mix of professional issues that focused on getting experience in a position which would provide satisfaction and 'make a difference'. Balanced against these were personal factors of partner & family and gaining some sense of financial security. Travel and cross-cultural experiences [rank 5 and 7] could well overlap both these areas. Further studies and personal professional development could well influence location preferences [Table 8].

Three to five years on family, desirable location, financial consolidation ranked as the four most frequently mentioned factors by the small group who responded to this part of the opened ended question, however the ranking changed. Family and partner consideration became the first priority followed by work availability/location and financial security.

PDHPE NQTs were initially balancing finances & debt, family & partner and work in a desired location. Diploma of Education beginning teachers were the most professionally oriented in their reported balance between finances & debt with family & partner with their gaining teaching experience, making a difference and being inspiring in their chosen career. For the Bachelor of Education students it was gaining experience in a full time job. The three year Bachelor of Teaching group were balancing family/partner and finances/debt with gaining teaching experience. The travel and the new culture factor were a pervasive second level influence for all groups in the initial period.

The family, marriage or partner factor was the highest ranked priority for three of the programs and second [after financial considerations] for the PDHPE teachers in the three to

five year period. Work availability & gaining experience remained priorities and financial security remained the third priority for the Bachelor of Teaching primary and Dip. Ed. groups.

Table 8 Factors influencing NQTs initial and medium term professional aspirations?

Factors and plans for future	In the next 1 to 2 years [Responses 271]			In 3 to 5 years [Responses 161]		
	Total	Rank	%	Total	Rank	%
Teach & gain experience/skill development at teacher	39	1	14	12	4	7
Family/marriage/partner consideration	38	2	14	29	1	18
Finances/security & pay back loans	37	3	13	14	3	9
Work availability in desired location	30	4	11	15	2	9
Travel or learn more within different cultures	21	5	8	6	7	4
Desire for a full time position	17	6	7	7	6	4
Contribute in a positive way/ inspire/make a difference	16	7	6	9	5	6
Level of satisfaction with chosen career	16	7	6	2	14	1
Want to live coastal/close to family and friends/little travel	6	9	2	6	7	4
Complete further studies	6	9	2	3	12	2
Advancement opportunities & self education	5	11	2	6	7	4
Holidays	5	11	2	3	12	2

Women ranked family, marriage or partner considerations as the top priority in both time periods. Otherwise the four top factors were the same as the sample in Table 9. Travel ranked 5th for women and 8th for men. Family, marriage or partner was ranked first by 24 per cent of men and 22 per cent of women in the three to five year period. Women sought a desirable work location [2nd] followed by the arrangement of their finances & loans. Men jointly ranked [2nd] gaining experience in a full time position followed by work location and their sorting of finances & loans.

Discussion

The diversity of ages and prior experiences in this beginning teacher cohort contributes to the diversity of expectations reported. In the Diploma in Education and the two primary programs the median age was in the late twenties, with 40 per cent of the males being over 28 year of age. The PDHPE group were the most homogeneous. Four out of ten of the beginning teachers were in ongoing relationships. Over 20 per cent had dependents and for males this was 32 per cent.

The aspiration to initially teach by the group was very strong at the end of their education program [95%]. This level of interest only dipped slightly at five years out with the PDHPE NQTs [15%] the most likely to consider alternative work related to their personal interests and related training.

There were substantial gaps between the beginning teachers' preferred employment status and what they actually expected both initially and after three to five years by program and gender. The sense of 'realistic pessimism' was greatest for women seeking full time work both initially and after five years.

Experience in the workforce was a key characteristic of the sample. Most beginning teachers knew from personal experience the 'real world' of balancing work, family/relationships and their personal/student lives. Two thirds of the males and the Diploma in Education beginning teachers had previously held a full time employment. The number working part-time during their education studies varied from 94 per cent of the PDHPE group to just over half of the Dip. Ed. graduates.

Given the employment opportunities the 2002 cohort felt they would realistically face, it was little wonder that 79 per cent were considering working in another industry, travelling or continuing to study. A quarter of the Diploma in Education group who had the widest age range and most extensive prior full time work experience were the most likely to seek alternative employment. Four out of ten of the mostly younger and single PDHPE NQTs who had mostly come straight from schools into their tertiary program were keen to "hit the skies" if there was no full time work. Many [62%] of the beginning teachers did not respond to the '... if not teaching what' question in three to five years - quiet hope perhaps!

Teaching was seen as a international or global vocation in their combined professional and personal life. Teaching overseas was considered likely by 25 per cent of females and but only 16 per cent of males in both time periods. This is an area for further inquiry in the follow-up phase on the study. The Diploma group was the most interested in an international experience. Teaching interstate was an ongoing option for over 13 per cent in five years and 18 per cent of males were more likely to keep their options open over the same time period. Likely movement between level of teaching and a willingness to change their preferred sector or be flexible increased over time. From this data the likelihood of teacher supply projections for NSW schools suggested by Ramsey may require some downward revision.

Is teaching primarily a fit of personality factors to profession role as Holland suggests or the Ochsner & Solomon's market responsive career based theory? The factors influencing the beginning teachers' professional aspirations in this study clearly reflected a desire to develop and contribute as a professional in a career that inspired others and has opportunities for travel and cross cultural experiences. Young's (1995) findings from her sample of elite beginning teachers in Californian were reflected in this study. Initially professional aspirations were clearly moderated by the economics of financial security, repaying loans, working in a desirable location were reflected in the three to five year period toward family/partner, location of teaching work and financial priorities. Developing professional skills and experience were possibly now assumed with contributing to making a difference higher in rank.

The 'wider influences' on beginning teachers planning decisions reflected stronger family, partner & personal factors than financial and security and job availability. Travel and change of scene from university city became the third most important influence after family/partner and personal factors in the five year time span.

The development of competence as a teacher and confidence to make a difference were central in the responses to the opened ended questions on influences on career decision making. While the frustrations of getting an appropriate job were clearly evident, the level of beginning teacher negativity so powerfully reflected in the Leong, Lang and McCormack studies were not evident at this early pre-employment phase in the NQT's experience.

The planned interviews with these teachers two years after graduation during the second phase of this inquiry will explore the extent to which their preferred and realistic employment preferences have been realised. This data will allow a critique of the stage theory of teacher development.

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