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Academic Paper — 5 Points

Score of 1	Score of 2	Score of 3	Score of 4	Score of 5
Report on Existing Knowledge	**Report on Existing Knowledge with Simplistic Use of a Research Method**	**Ineffectual Argument for a New Understanding**	**Well-Supported, Articulate Argument Conveying a New Understanding**	**Rich Analysis of a New Understanding Addressing a Gap in the Research Base**
• Presents an overly broad topic of inquiry.	• Presents a topic of inquiry with narrowing scope or focus, that is NOT carried through either in the method or in the overall line of reasoning.	• Carries the focus or scope of a topic of inquiry through the method AND overall line of reasoning, even though the focus or scope might still be narrowing.	• Focuses a topic of inquiry with clear and narrow parameters, which are addressed through the method and the conclusion.	• Focuses a topic of inquiry with clear and narrow parameters, which are addressed through the method and the conclusion.
• Situates a topic of inquiry within a single perspective derived from scholarly works OR through a variety of perspectives derived from mostly non-scholarly works.	• Situates a topic of inquiry within a single perspective derived from scholarly works OR through a variety of perspectives derived from mostly non-scholarly works.	• Situates a topic of inquiry within relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives, although connections to some works may be unclear	• Explicitly connects a topic of inquiry to relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives AND logically explains how the topic of inquiry addresses a gap.	• Explicitly connects a topic of inquiry to relevant scholarly works of varying perspectives AND logically explains how the topic of inquiry addresses a gap.
• Describes a search and report process.	• Describes a nonreplicable research method OR provides an oversimplified description of a method, with questionable alignment to the purpose of the inquiry.	• Describes a reasonably replicable research method, with questionable alignment to the purpose of the inquiry.	• Logically defends the alignment of a detailed, replicable research method to the purpose of the inquiry	• Logically defends the alignment of a detailed, replicable research method to the purpose of the inquiry.
• Summarizes or reports existing knowledge in the field of understanding pertaining to the topic of inquiry.	• Summarizes or reports existing knowledge in the field of understanding pertaining to the topic of inquiry.	• Conveys a new understanding or conclusion, with an underdeveloped line of reasoning OR insufficient evidence.	• Supports a new understanding or conclusion through a logically organized line of reasoning AND sufficient evidence. The limitations and/or implications, if present, of the new understanding or conclusion are oversimplified.	• Justifies a new understanding or conclusion through a logical progression of inquiry choices, sufficient evidence, explanation of the limitations of the conclusion, and an explanation of the implications to the community of practice.
• Generally communicates the student's ideas, although errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization distract or confuse the reader.	• Generally communicates the student's ideas, although errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization distract or confuse the reader.	• Competently communicates the student's ideas, although there may be some errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization.	• Competently communicates the student's ideas, although there may be some errors in grammar, discipline-specific style, and organization.	• Enhances the communication of the student's ideas through organization, use of design elements, conventions of grammar, style, mechanics, and word precision, with few to no errors.
• Cites AND/OR attributes sources (in bibliography/ works cited and/or intext), with multiple errors and/or an inconsistent use of a discipline specific style.	• Cites AND/OR attributes sources (in bibliography/ works cited and/or intext), with multiple errors and/or an inconsistent use of a discipline specific style.	• Cites AND attributes sources, using a discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited AND intext), with few errors or inconsistencies.	• Cites AND attributes sources, with a consistent use of an appropriate discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited AND intext), with few to no errors.	• Cites AND attributes sources, with a consistent use of an appropriate discipline-specific style (in both bibliography/works cited AND intext), with few to no errors.

Motivations of Second Career Teachers

AP Research

Word Count: 4919

Introduction

Only one third of teachers in the United States claimed they were very satisfied with their job (Pew Research Center, 2023). The recently developed teacher shortage is a pressing issue not only in the United States, but everywhere. In fact, a report on teachers disclosed an urgent need for 44 million primary and secondary teachers globally by 2030 (UNESCO, 2024). The 2020 pandemic accelerated the shortage of teachers as many were upset in their career as a result of remote teaching and other frustrating circumstances. This facilitated many early retirements and resignations. Negative media campaigns that were critical of teachers also took a toll on their happiness in the profession. These issues made it difficult to staff teachers in schools and even harder to retain them (White et al., 2024).

My research revolved around individuals who joined the teaching profession after working previous jobs and studying other majors. This is because recruiting individuals to teach as a second career could be a way to mitigate the teacher shortage. According to previous research, a second career teacher is defined as someone over the age of twenty-five who has acquired valuable life experience from time in previous occupations and situations. The only profile that represents a true second-career teacher is an individual who did not have any previous connection to education (Tigchelaar et al., 2008 as quoted in Bar-Tal et al., 2020). According to a 2017 Harris Poll on K-12 teachers, one in three teachers started off in different careers. This reveals that teaching as a second career is a fairly common experience among individuals, so this research topic seemed meaningful. I am trying to gain a new understanding of what factors drew teachers who pursued non-traditional career paths into education. The current climate of the teacher shortage and difficulty in recruiting teachers is what changed since the last

time anyone asked this question. It is important to have this updated information available to understand how to combat this teacher deficit.

Therefore, these ideas led me to my research question: what are the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that drew current teachers, who did not major in education in undergrad, to pursue a career in teaching at the high school level?

Review of Literature

Factors and Motivations

Extrinsic motivations "concern behaviors done for reasons other than their inherent satisfactions" (Ryan & Deci, 2020, p. 2). Examples of extrinsic motivators for teachers found in a typical school setting include having a considerably high salary and solid cooperation with students and parents (Hughes, 2012). Alternatively, intrinsic motivations were activities done for their own inherent interest and satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Intrinsic motivators for teachers were factors such as having strong leadership, nurturing collaborative relationships in the workplace, and fostering supportive social ties (Fuller et al., 2016). Other examples were having an inclination to work with children, being service-oriented, and feeling a genuine passion to teach (Hogg, 2023). Due to these motivators, teachers are an essential topic of study in relation to extrinsic and intrinsic motivations.

Career-Change Teachers (CCTs) and Second-Career Teachers (SCTs)

Bar-Tal et al. (2020) examined factors that heightened job satisfaction in SCTs. They compared first-career teachers (FCTs) with second-career teachers (SCTs) and found no significant difference in their satisfaction levels. Both groups reported significant differences in their methods of coping with situations in relation to difficult students and parents. SCTs

perceive certain situations like parent overreach and difficult students as significantly less stressful as they are typically more experienced throughout life, including possibly being a parent, as well as displaying higher self-efficacy in relationships (Addi-Raccah & Ainhoren, 2009). Furthermore, a later example proves that one of the biggest predictors of satisfaction for FCTs was their workload. The greater amount of workload FCTs experienced, the lower their satisfaction levels were. This overwhelming feeling of bombardment contributed to their low satisfaction levels. As for SCTs, when they experienced a high-intensity workload, it was not found to impact them. This differing impact on job satisfaction is a likely result of how they utilized coping strategies in the workplace. Additionally, SCTs' satisfaction levels during their first five years of teaching remained steady, while FCTs' satisfaction levels fluctuated in a U-shaped pattern (Bar-Tal et al., 2020). This could partially be due to the fact that SCTs have more experience and can carry on their previous experience with other situations into education, making their satisfaction levels more regular than a novice teacher.

Hughes (2012) noted that teachers who experienced better support, cooperation, and participation with parents and students were more likely to stay in the profession. The research done in this study is similar to the research done by Bar-Tal et al. (2020) as both studies placed emphasis on the influence of students and parents on job satisfaction for teachers. When teachers have a positive experience with their varying professional relationships, they have a seemingly more promising outlook when it comes to staying in the profession.

Career-change teachers (CCTs) were termed as "individuals who have 'pursued a different career or type of employment before making the decision to leave that career and become a teacher'" (White et al., 2024, p. 4). Due to the similar definitions, second-career

teachers and career-change teachers were used synonymously throughout my research paper to avoid confusion. Second-career teachers were more commonly referenced; however, CCTs were mentioned throughout this literature review because of how other researchers cited it in their papers.

Previous studies have identified various incentives for why individuals decide to become teachers. Lee (2011) conducted a study on the motivations and experiences that serve as catalysts for teacher motivation. The author concluded that the most popular catalysts among participants were: a desirable professional life, passion to work with children, propensity to make a difference, and hope to influence the future. Some SCTs had previous jobs and professional skills that carried on from their old job into their new profession as a teacher, such as communication skills, overall attitude towards the profession, and leadership and organizational skills (Khan, 2024). Evidently, individuals become attracted to teaching due to different reasons, whether that be from outside or within.

Since career-change and second-career teachers do not follow the traditional collegiate path into education, they must follow an alternative certification path to obtain a job as a teacher.

Alternative Certification Paths (ACPs)

An alternative certification path, or ACP, allows individuals to attain a teaching career within a shorter time span than someone who took the traditional path and studied the career in college (Tigchelaar et al., 2008). A study done by Evans (2011) compares individuals who took the traditional collegiate career path versus those who went through an ACP to obtain certification. Both FCTs and SCTs concluded that working with students was a primary pull factor in the career. Additionally, those who took the traditional path were primarily inspired by

their own teachers early on in their education. These positive experiences in school largely contributed to their career choice. Individuals who took an ACP claimed they were unsatisfied with their previous careers and looked for fulfillment elsewhere. ACPs make it much easier for people to switch careers and are a popular choice if individuals decide to become teachers. Overall, being dissatisfied with any previous career and having a deep-rooted passion to be a teacher were major factors in joining the profession (Evans, 2011; Hogg, 2023).

Participants note that time is considered both an enabler and constraint of the ACP program. Individuals enjoy the abridged program, but struggle to meet certain time requirements and deadlines along with it (White et al., 2024). It is essentially packing four-years worth of education into a few semesters, so it is more time-demanding for participants overall. Though there may be room for improvement, ACPs make it possible for individuals at all different points in life to become a teacher, and this idea has led me to research the phenomenon behind the choice to become a second-career teacher.

Ornstein (1982) notes that teaching has become more stressful over time, resulting in greater burnout and more dissatisfaction in the job. In 1962, dissatisfaction was primarily a result of salary, conditions of the school building, and poor human relations. However, in 2007, dissatisfaction was due to poor behavior of students and heavy time demands (Klassen & Anderson, 2009). Factors such as location of the school, student demographics, gender of students, and social and personal factors have also been found to be influential on teachers' stress levels (Morgan & O'Leary, 2004). Overall, job satisfaction levels over the years have fluctuated as a result of differing factors.

Many of the sources I utilized in this literature review were written years ago. The new evolution of the teacher shortage is now prevalent which indicates that things may have changed. Given the recent teacher shortage, the goal of my paper is to give an updated understanding of what has changed since the last time anyone asked this question. These sources and the identified gap have led me to my research question: what are the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that drew current teachers, who did not major in education in undergrad, to pursue a career in teaching at the high school level? The purpose of this study is to explore the motivations of teachers who pursued non-traditional career paths into education.

Method

The methodology I used to conduct my research was a phenomenological case study, which allowed me to gain a deep understanding of my participants' thoughts and feelings in relation to my research topic. A phenomenological study was defined as "a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions and perspectives relative to a particular situation" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 273). A case study was a choice of what to study rather than an actual methodological choice (Stake, 2005).

I decided on a qualitative method as the goal was to understand the phenomenon surrounding individuals' decisions to become second-career teachers. In a qualitative method, the researcher focuses on a phenomenon, then captures and studies the complexity of the phenomenon in order to construct "a meaningful picture of a complex, multifaceted situation" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 270). I selected a phenomenological case study because I wanted to conduct in-depth interviews in order to gather data. Börü (2018) conducted a phenomenological study. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews as the primary method to gather data.

This study is similar to mine as the researcher used this method to look at internal and external factors, which is almost interchangeable with the factors I researched. I did a case study because it provided me with the most flexibility in the number of participants, since initially, I was unsure how many I would be able to recruit. My case study was phenomenological because it allowed me to gather information about participants' personal experiences surrounding my research topic. Lee (2011) also utilized a form of a phenomenological study. That research was comparable to mine, as this author looked at what prompted individuals to become teachers after working in other professions; this was a major part of my research question. However, the landscape of teaching has changed dramatically since this piece was published in 2011. There are now much more intense accountability measures added for teachers, decrease in support for educators, and the 2020 pandemic. These altered experiences have contributed to new possible motivators as the environment is incredibly different now compared to fourteen years ago. I was originally going to conduct a mixed-methods study by doing both a survey and interviews. A mixed-methods study is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). I decided to reject this method because it did not seem necessary for the kind of information I was seeking. Though I did use a survey to recruit participants, it was not the best fit to collect in-depth qualitative data.

My project offered nearly zero ethical issues. I completed a form addressing the few possible ethical issues that could occur and got approved by the IRB. I provided an informed consent form for individuals to sign outlining the procedures of my research and any potential concerns. Individuals voluntarily signed the consent form before participating in my research.

Participants

The participants of my research ranged from ages twenty-seven to early sixties. I recruited both males and females and interviewed fourteen participants total. I utilized snowball sampling in "which one participant suggests another potential participant" (Lee, 2011, p. 6). I also used convenience sampling which is when participants are chosen from somewhere convenient for the researcher (Andrade, 2020). I interviewed most teachers from my high school, specifically, which was convenient for me. I chose to research high school teachers because teachers at this level play a major role in uniquely shaping students' lives, and they are very impactful for society's future; this makes them a primary subject group worth researching.

A piece of inclusion criteria for my participants is that they must be a second-career teacher, as defined in my literature review. Participants who did not meet this criteria were not included in my study.

Materials and Sampling

I measured the catalysts for motivations that prompted individuals to join the teaching career despite working other professions and majoring in other sectors. I created a survey through Google Forms and emailed it to teachers at my school to recruit participants (see Appendix A). I conducted semi-structured interviews with the recruited participants. A study done by Tigchelaar et al. (2008) utilized semi-structured interviews to gather information on how alternative certification programs affect second career teachers' retention rates. The authors of this study were able to gather valuable information surrounding the research topic that would have otherwise been difficult to gather just through a survey. Holding interviews allowed for more elaboration, clarity, and in-depth information which is why my data was obtained through semi-structured interviews.

My semi-structured interviews were constructed of fourteen initial questions, and then I

embedded follow-up questions as it deemed necessary (see Appendix A). The interviews ranged

from 10-30 minutes long.

Procedure

Most of the interviews were done in-person with the participants. Two interviews were

done virtually via Google Meet. I used two devices to record the interviews in case one failed: a

computer and phone. The phone was set up next to me and audio-recorded only through a voice

memo app. After an interview concluded, I saved the audio-recorded interview in the app to

which only I had access. I then transcribed the interviews for later data analysis by uploading

them into SoundTrap, saving the transcriptions into my Google Drive, and then manually editing

the transcriptions to fix errors. After I finished the transcription, I divided the interview data

from participants into small sentences that could be coded individually. Then I identified each

individual section of the interviews that I split up and compared them among participants to look

for patterns between them. I combined codes of participants who said the same thing into one

code and slimmed down my list to seven total codes. After the interviews were analyzed, I

deleted them from all devices to ensure protection of my participants' privacy.

<div align="center">Findings and Discussion</div>

From my interviews, several codes and themes emerged. I put the codes and their

definitions into Table 1 below. I presented my findings in the form of a chart.

Table 1: Definitions of Themes in Context of Research

Codes	Definition	Corresponding Themes
Work-life balance	Previous jobs too demanding; wanted something more family-friendly	- Wanted to start a family - Wanted to be home more - Does not involve travel
Void	Felt like something was missing from the feeling of fulfillment	- Lack of fulfilment - One-of-a-kind career - Replacement figure - Making a difference - Seeing growth and success
External influence	Influenced by other people to become a teacher	- Teens versus adults - Having influential teachers
Exposure to kids	Working with kids prior to career switch	- Teens versus adults - Enjoy being around kids - Experience coaching and babysitting
Students	Kids in the classroom	- Teens versus adults - Most enjoyable part of teaching - Seeing growth and success - Teens make it exciting
(Un)predictability	Each day is new and different	- Offers variation - Not repetitive or boring
Unsustainability	Not maintainable long-term	- Physical/mental drainage of first career - Seeing influence in real time - Making a difference

The table below presents a brief synopsis of key events presented in each interview and how each experience was identified, given the codes defined in Table 1.

Table 2: Summary of 14 Interviews

Participant	Personal Experience	Themes
1	- Prior career was too physically demanding	Unsustainability
	- Managed/supervised adults	Teens versus adults
	- Never know what each day is going to look like in teaching which is a good thing	(Un)predictability
	- Missed not being able to help people in old career; teaching was a career that fulfilled that	Void, civil/public service
		One-of-a-kind career
	- Nothing is like teaching	Students
	- Community of students is the best part	Relationships
2	- Coached football team and realized that working with teenagers was enjoyable, then decided to get a master's on the teaching track	External influence
	- Positive relationships in old career and job now	Relationships
	- Enjoy seeing growth and success in others now	Students Success
3	- Identified old career as a "springboard career not meant for long-term sustainability"	Unsustainability
	- Wanted to start a family and felt teaching was compatible with that	Work-life balance
	- Coached swimming lessons and really enjoyed working with kids	Outside influence
	- Became passionate to work with kids as a teenager, career switch coincided with wife getting a new job: felt like a "natural transition"	Opportunity
	- Enjoys that each day is different as a teacher (previously worked a job with regimented schedule, same thing on a weekly basis)	(Un)predictability

4	- Adults were frustrating to work with in old career	Teens versus adults
	- Was surrounded by peers and family who were teachers	External influence
	- Love seeing kids succeed academically	Students Success
5	- Old job was typical office job: boring, lonely, and sedative	Unsustainability
	- Liked the idea of having more people interaction; that is favorite part of teaching now	Relationships
	- Did not plan to be a teacher until had to be a TA while getting master's degree, then fell in love with teaching	Opportunity
	- Love being around staff and students	Students
6	- Adults were frustrating to work with; felt like babysitting	Teens versus adults
	- Boring, not something participant felt passionate about long-term	Unsustainability
	- Wanted to start a family	Work-life balance
	- Favorite part of teaching is seeing students learn and succeed	Students Success
7	- Worked solely with adults in old job	Teens versus adults
	- Old job was too demanding in terms of travel	Unsustainability
	- Wanted to be home with children	Work-life balance
	- Most enjoyable part of being a teacher is students	Students
8	- Managed adults in old job	Teen versus adults
	- Worked long days; needed a job that would be easy with a family	Work-life balance
	- Did not feel fulfilled in prior job	Void
	- Always thought about teaching, but did not act on it for a while	Opportunity
	- Enjoys that every day is different	(Un)predictability
	- Teaching is a way to give back	Civil/public service
	- Love seeing students improve	Students Success
9	- Management job involved lots of communication and collaboration	Relationships

		with others	
	-	Covid pandemic; wanted to be home so became a teacher and ended up loving it	Opportunity
	-	Old job was too surface-level and phony	Unsustainability One-of-a-kind career
	-	Teaching is immeasurable to other careers	
	-	Being able to make a difference was meaningful	Civil/public service
	-	Favorite part of teaching is student body	Students
10	-	Was not reaching full potential in old job	Void Unsustainability
	-	Previous career was not a passion	Students
	-	Seeing students grow is best part of career	Success
11	-	Worked in business, then started coaching which led to teaching	Exposure to kids
	-	Old job was boring and repetitive	Unsustainability
	-	Nothing else like having a great day in teaching	One-of-a-kind career
	-	Love seeing students engaged and learning	Students Success
12	-	"Heard a voice" saying to do something different	Internal/External Influence
	-	TA in undergrad	Exposure to kids
	-	Seeing kids finally understand something	Students Success
	-	Being a parental replacement for some students	Replacement figures
13	-	Days were less predictable than working in a lab	(Un)predictability
	-	Immediate feedback, see impact in real time every day	Influence
	-	Working with others	Relationships
	-	Tutored high school kids	Exposure to kids
	-	Lack of funding for old job	Opportunity
	-	Met advisor who was inspiring	External influence
	-	Seeing kids learn	Students Success

14	-	Wanted to live closer to family; prompted move as couldn't continue previous job in different location	Opportunity, Work-life balance
	-	Love to work with people	Relationships
	-	Met up with old teacher to discuss pros and cons of teaching; decided to give it a try	External influence
	-	Seeing kids succeed and cultivating "magic moments"	Students Success
	-	Always want to help and serve others	Civil/public service

The perspectives I gathered in my interviews delineated the types of experiences that motivated individuals to become second-career teachers. I excluded the piece of evidence surrounding if work came home or not. I decided not to include this evidence because I received varying points of view on this topic and did not have a definitive enough conclusion to make it one of my themes. It was not valuable evidence to include since I realized this depended on how hard teachers worked during school hours and the intensity of the subject taught. My participants taught a range of subjects, so I could not confidently include this evidence. I assumed that all participants answered the questions honestly, to the best of their ability, and presented an accurate recollection of their experiences. My goal was to identify the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that motivated individuals to choose teaching as a second career. The codes I created from my data collection fall under those categories. In the sections below, I discussed the most notable and recurring codes that came up during interviews, and combined some of the codes that correlated into the same section.

Recurring Theme 1: Work-Life Balance

Out of all my codes, one of the most prevalent was work-life balance. 5 out of 14 participants - Participants 3, 6, 7, 8, and 14 - explained experiences falling under this theme that made teaching so appealing. As shown in Table 1 above, work-life balance is having time for both personal and professional duties. For example, Participant 6 stated, "I really just wanted a job where I knew I could get my kids to practice, and if they had vacation I could be on the vacation, and I wasn't going to be missing their things because I was working." In talking about their previous career, Participant 7 explained "It started getting really demanding in terms of travel and some of that travel was international travel and I had three kids at home so I didn't really like international travelling."

These participants are prime examples of how a lot of careers are not suitable for having a family. Being overworked and having to travel makes it difficult for individuals to make time for their personal lives. Thus, teaching is deemed enticing for this reason as it allows free weekends, set days off during the year, and not being far away from family. Although participants all had varied experiences in their previous careers that did not allow plenty of personal time, the underlying theme was the same: work-life balance. Though it is only 5 out of 14 participants who explained that the family-friendly aspect of teaching was appealing, work-life balance can still be concluded as a prevalent motivating factor. This is because other participants may not have had careers as demanding as others. Other participants also could have been single and without kids at the time of their career switch, making work-life balance not as inducing. In this case, participants who valued work-life balance felt the need to enter a career that offered that. When employees work in a demanding career, their enjoyment for the career may decay as they do not have a lot of time for their personal and family lives. The recurrence of

this piece of data suggests that the flexibility for work-life balance displayed in teaching in comparison to other careers is a primary extrinsic motivator for individuals to leave their other career and become a teacher.

Recurring Theme 2: External Influence and Exposure to Kids

Another repetitive theme was external influence, which also includes exposure to kids. 9 out of 14 participants stated they were influenced by the people around them to become a teacher. Participant 13 said "This is something I had never considered, it's something I really didn't enjoy [...] I never really liked explaining how to do things to other people and then I met my graduate school advisor, who actually was really good at explaining complicated concepts in a simple way [...] it became fun for me."

Five of the participants coached and worked around children in prior careers. Several participants claimed that working with children opened up their eyes to being a teacher where they could work with young students every day. Participant 11 stated: "I started coaching volleyball. And then a friend of mine said, 'you missed your calling, you should have been a teacher.'" Another participant had people around them who became teachers, which made them consider the job as well: "[My wife] became a teacher and then some friends became teachers too. I thought teaching would be the best thing for me." However, participant 12 was influenced by a mix of external and internal factors. Participant 12 was diagnosed with a tumor and remarked "When God says you could die, suddenly you hear someone's voice telling you should do something different. And so that's why I went into teaching at the time. I had a voice in my head, and it was my department chairman from biology, and he said, 'We achieve immortality in the hearts and minds of those that we love and teach.'" This was an interesting piece of evidence

as it was the voice of a real person in this participant's life; however, it was also a subconscious thought. I could not clearly define this as extrinsic or intrinsic motivation, so I considered it to fall under both categories.

These quotes from participants exemplify how the influence of peers, family, friends, and interactions with others affect career choice. When individuals are surrounded by people that are teachers or encourage the idea of being one, they are more apt to become one due to this external influence. These are all different forms of extrinsic motivations, yet they all drew individuals into the teaching career.

Recurring Theme 3: Students

13 out of 14 participants mentioned that students are their favorite part of their career now for a multitude of reasons. Many participants touched on the satisfaction of seeing students succeed and grow academically. Participant 8 stated "I love when you reap a moment when someone gets something that they didn't get [previously]. And you know it's because of how you taught it and your approach." Participant 10 similarly said "I think the biggest incentive was to help students grow, and to see that growth and be part of that growth was very exciting." Participant 1 claimed that "You never know what you're stepping into because teenagers will surprise you every day, and so to me, that's kind of what makes it so exciting and fun."

Given that almost one hundred percent of the participants stated that students were their favorite part of teaching for one reason or another, it can be inferred that students are one of the main extrinsic factors to either join or stay in the profession of teaching.

Recurring Theme 4: (Un)predictability

5 out of 14 participants mentioned the (un)predictability of teaching. Though this superficially appears as not a significant amount, I chose to include it as an important theme that occurred due to the unexpectedness of this theme. Participant 8 stated: "I love that each day is different. I can't think of another profession, or not too many, with as many variables in any given day." Similarly, Participant 1 commented, "I could never work in a cubicle. That's so boring and bland, same thing everyday, I think I would go crazy. Here, I don't feel like that ever exists." Participant 5, who worked in a sedentary office job, described the career as "very alone, very sedative." Coming from someone who worked in an office job, this coincides with other participants' supposed point of view on being stuck in a cubicle every day.

It is clear that some jobs appear to be too boring and bland to be considered sustainable as a life-long career. Teaching offers variety as it does not involve doing the same thing every day. New curriculum, lessons, student behaviors, and school events offer diversity. When employees have variation in their daily life, they may be less likely to get bored and feel burnt out in a shorter period of time. The unpredictability and variety of teaching makes it an enjoyable career for the majority of teachers, because something new happens every day.

Recurring Theme 5: Unsustainability and Void

8 out of 14 participants stated their previous jobs were unsustainable, whether it lacked sustainability, physically or mentally. Three participants discussed how they did not feel fulfilled in their previous careers, which prompted them to look for change. Participant 8 claimed, "I think I always felt there was something else that was drawing me. Something else I needed to be doing. And teaching was something I had thought about, but didn't act on until then." Participant

10 also stated that "When I knew I needed to change jobs was when I felt like I always knew a little bit about a lot of stuff, and I never felt like I was really digging in."

These internal feelings participants went through contributed to their choice to be a teacher. Realizing they can only do some types of careers for so long, and feeling a general lack of fulfillment in other careers, helped steer them into the direction to be teachers. Here, they could constantly help people learn, grow, and fill the void they once had.

The results of this study suggest that there are various extrinsic and intrinsic factors that motivate individuals to become teachers. The extrinsic factors recognized include physical unsustainability of previous jobs, exposure to kids, experience teaching in the classroom environment, and the influence of peers and others. Intrinsic factors included mental unsustainability of previous jobs, inclination to make a difference, desire to have a more family-friendly career between personal and professional life, and feeling a lack of fulfillment in prior career. This supports the study done by Evans (2011) who discovered that individuals left the career because they had a desire for a more rewarding career, similar to the intrinsic motivation I identified on individuals' inclination to make a difference. The study by Hogg (2023) also lines up with my research results as some individuals left their previous career because they wanted to work with children. The idea of teens versus adults identified in Table 1 goes along with this as well as exposure to kids. For several research participants, they wanted to be a teacher after being exposed to children through coaching or other jobs.

Implications

As discussed in my introduction, due to the global pandemic in 2020 and the years following, teachers' satisfaction plummeted. The conclusions of my research have multiple

implications for the future of schools. First of all, the findings of my study indicate there are various, both intrinsic and extrinsic, factors that prompt individuals to become teachers. These factors do vary from person to person depending on one's interests; however, there were still some common denominators that came up for more than half of participants. Administrators, schools, and superintendents looking for more teachers should appeal to these factors in the promotion of the career. One of the participants in my study wisely commented, "I don't think teachers always do the best they can because when people ask what they do, I have heard people say, 'well, I'm just a teacher 'and I think that needs to change because that's kind of sad." Often, people overlook teaching as a career because of what it entails and the salary it makes. However, teachers get several days off during the year, do not work on the weekends or have to do the same thing everyday, and this career is primarily sustainable long-term. These are the aspects of teaching that should be advertised and promoted, not the salary. These motivators should be thought about more in the future when brainstorming how to hire more teachers.

Directions for Future Research

   I am curious if this conclusion applies to more than high school level teachers. Researchers in the future could dive into this topic on a larger scale and look at different levels of teachers: pre-school, elementary, middle school, etc. Doing so could possibly expand the conclusion made on high school teachers to all sorts of different teachers. Therefore, this could have bigger, more vast, implications if similar conclusions were drawn surrounding teachers at all levels, and evidently, could help mitigate the teacher shortage over time.

<div align="center">

Limitations

</div>

It is important to identify possible limitations that could have affected the data. The most notable limitation was the sample group of high school teachers in northeast Ohio. Since I solely interviewed teachers at high schools in the northeast Ohio area, my results are only representative of that population. This means I can not confidently say this data applies to all teachers, only teachers at the high school level in this area. Another limitation was human error. I interviewed participants and their responses were based on memories of experiences that happened years ago. A study on the neuroscience of memory stated that "memory distortions can occur simply with the passage of time" (Lacy & Stark, 2013, para. 17). Some key events could have been unintentionally left out of the study purely due to participants' forgetfulness. It is recognized that due to the specificity of my interview, the most important events were likely mentioned. Nonetheless, such an error was possible.

Conclusion

My research study agreed with several past studies: Evans (2011), Lee (2011), Hughes (2012), Bar-Tal et al. (2020), and Hogg (2023). They shared motivators for second-career teachers, such as wanting a desirable professional life, unsustainability of previous career, inclination to make a difference, and passion to work with younger individuals. These motivations also came up in my study, which indicates that some factors have stayed the same, even decades later. The extrinsic and intrinsic motivations I identified offered an updated understanding of how these motivations changed, or for some factors, stayed the same, since the emergence of the teacher shortage. Because of this, the identified motivations can be used in the future to appeal to individuals when trying to hire more teachers. Research could also be

expanded to levels outside of high school, and in turn, hopefully aid in hiring and retaining more

teachers.

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Appendix A

Google Form Recruitment Survey
1. What is your name?
2. What is your email?
3. What school do you teach at currently?
4. Have you taught at any other schools in the past?
5. How long have you been teaching (years)?
6. What college(s) did you go to?
7. What was your first profession you worked in following college?
8. Would you be interested in being interviewed as a participant in my AP Research project surrounding second-career teachers?

List of Interview Questions
1. How long have you been a teacher?
2. What did you major and/or minor in in college?
3. Tell me about your first job after graduating from undergrad.
    a. What kinds of responsibilities did you have?
    b. Describe a typical day in that job.
4. Can you please describe the differences between your previous job and teaching?
5. What are the similarities between your previous job and teaching?
    a. If they say no similarities - that's fine. Say "tell me more about that" or "what makes it so different?"
6. Have you worked in any other fields besides teaching and your first career?
    [follow up with similarities/differences again for the other career - questions 4 and 5]
7. After how many years in your previous profession(s) did you decide to become a teacher?
8. Is there a specific reason you left your previous profession?
9. What would you consider to be the biggest incentive or motivation for you to become a teacher?
10. Was teaching something you ever considered as a student in high school or college? Tell me about that process.
11. What is the most enjoyable part of your career as a teacher now?
12. Do you miss anything about your previous career?
13. Would you ever consider leaving teaching to do something else? If so, what?

Academic Paper

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses* on AP Central.

Sample: D
Score: 4

This paper earns a score of 4. In topic, this paper seeks to explore what motivates people to take up teaching as a second career. The research objective is stated as, "I am trying to gain a new understanding of what factors drew teachers who pursued non-traditional career paths into education" (p.2). This leads to the research question: "what are the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that drew current teachers, who did not major in education in undergrad, to pursue a career in teaching at the high school level?" (p. 3; repeated on p. 7).

This paper does not earn a score of 3 because the gap is previewed in the introductory paragraph and defended on p. 7. Additionally, the paper defends the methodological approach (a phenomenological case study employing semi-structured interviews with 14 second-career teachers, aged from 27 to early 60s) on p. 9. The use of semi-structured interviews with second-career HS teachers is well-aligned with the RQ, and there is sufficient evidence to answer that RQ in the "findings" section on pp. 10 - 20.

This paper does not earn a score of 5, however, because the limitations and implications are oversimplified. In terms of limitations, for example, on p. 22 the paper acknowledges the possibility of human error among interviewees when recalling their experiences but does not address the possibility of human error on the part of the researcher when performing the thematic analysis. In terms of implications, for example, on p. 21 it states that by examining the motivations of pre-school, elementary, middle school teachers, "…bigger, more vast, implications if similar conclusions were drawn… " but these implications were not stated. Taken together this paper represents a well-supported, articulate argument conveying a new understanding.