Preservice second career teachers: Backgrounds, strengths and perceived qualities of good teachers

Denise Beutel, Leanne Crosswell
Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

In many countries across the globe, the recruitment of second career teachers is seen as a solution to addressing teacher shortages. Second career teachers offer the promise of bringing ‘real world’ experience and substantive discipline knowledge to teaching along with a range of personal qualities and attributes drawn from prior careers and life experiences. Many second career teachers already hold university qualifications outside of education and so enter teaching via graduate entry teacher education programs that are shorter than the traditional four-year undergraduate programs. This paper reports on part of a larger study that aimed to get a better understanding of the knowledge, skills and characteristics of preservice second career teachers. In this paper, we draw on survey data from 53 preservice second career teachers enrolled in a one-year graduate entry teacher education program that is preparing them to teach in Australian primary school contexts. The data we use in this paper focuses on an examination of their prior experiences, perceived strengths and their perceptions of the qualities that constitute a ‘good’ teacher. The data also reveals the challenges that they believe await them in their transition to the classroom. The findings reveal a wide diversity of previous careers and a range of characteristics that includes enthusiasm, patience, open-mindedness and a strong work ethic. However, omissions and silences in the data that appear to indicate a lack of consideration of discipline knowledge and academic engagement as key qualities of a good teacher will also be discussed. The layers of the ‘onion’ model derived from the work of Dilts (1990) and Korthagen (2004) will be used as a theoretical framework to interpret the results. The research has implications for the ways in which teacher educators engage with this unique group and challenge their existing beliefs about teaching and learning to capitalise on their potential.

References
