Motivations of Post-baccalaureate Students Seeking Teacher Certification: A Context for Appropriate Advising Strategies

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Introduction

Changing careers is more commonplace today than in the past when adults remained in the same job throughout their working lives. Individuals may move through different careers dispelling the myth that there is only one right career (Lemme, 1995). Change is becoming a natural part of the adult career pattern and commonplace for both men and women (Evans & Laumann, 1983; Jacobs, 1983; Keating, N., & Jeffrey, B., 1983; Treiman, 1985). An overview of research reveals several of the following themes related to changing careers: (a) individuals often reevaluate life during a transition period at about the age of 30 (Levinson, 1978; Ornstein, & Isabella, 1990; Phillips, 1982) (b) this transition period often prompts changes in lifestyle or career (Dean, Eriksen, & Lindamood, 1987; Schlossberg, 1984); (c) adults in transition explore the job market, take stock of skills, and identify a career matched to the exploration (Riverin-Simard, 1988); and (d) adults begin to place great value on the relationship between their personal identity and career identity (Pera§a & Perosa, 1987).

For individuals choosing to make a career change specifically to teaching, the transition can be precipitated by various motivators including but not limited to evaluation of personal lifestyle, desire to
reform education, long-standing interest in teaching, or seeking fulfillment in work (Crow, Levine, & Nager, 1990; Bennett, 1991; Rife, Maloy, & Keefe, 1988; Unrau, 1993). Prompted by reported nationwide teacher shortages due to a decrease in the traditional recruiting groups (women and traditional age college students), a new audience of teacher candidates emerged in the form of mid-career changers. In response to shortages and the desire by professionals to change careers, universities began to institute programs specifically for mid-career changers wishing to enter the teaching profession.

Studies investigating programs that train mid-career changers were typically conducted with selective groups of students enrolled in Master's level programs in small, private institutions (Crow, Levine, & Nager, 1990; Bennett, 1991; Merseth, 1985, 1986; Rife, Maloy, & Keefe, 1988; Unrau, 1993). Students were often provided with stipends and other services to complete programs. What about the student who is not recruited to enter a funded program in a private institution and provided with related benefits? What about the post-baccalaureate, non-degree student in a metropolitan environment who is seeking teaching certification without the financial or support services of a funded program? Do those who self select rather than those who are recruited to teaching as a second career demonstrate the same motivating factors for changing to teaching as a career? Do they have the same expectations of teaching as a career?

A common purpose of the programs instituted for career changers is to evaluate motivating factors associated with the change. It is noted in the findings of these studies that the adults are highly motivated and strongly committed, yet are a different group compared to traditional college age teacher candidates and possess unique needs (Merseth, 1986; Peterson 1990; Rife, Maloy, & Keefe, 1988; Unrau, 1993). However, findings indicated that many of these career changers have illusions about teaching and are often unaware of what is required to make the change. Peterson (1990) sums it well in the observation that teaching as a second career “could be both difficult to enter and once there, not the easiest environment to adjust to” (p. 43).

Another common feature of these studies is the recognition that career changers need more than academic preparation and appropriate pedagogical knowledge. Students may be better suited with a broad spectrum program including support to fulfill their ambitions. However, lacking is a clear delineation of such support including pragmatic suggestions for helping students to successfully complete programs which reflect their desires and motivations. Absent from