

Research paper on the outlook for teachers: job analysis

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While searching job websites like Monster. com (2013) and professional social media sites such as LinkedIn. com (2013), it is easy to see that there are not many teaching openings available at the elementary, middle, or high school levels. This may be a function of time--teaching jobs tend to be posted in the spring rather than the fall-- but even those teaching jobs available are spread geographically far apart (Ma and Macmillan, 1999). The average teacher's salary varies by state, but according to Monster. com (2013), which compiles information on posted job listings and potential income, a teacher's starting salary is nearly always below \$40, 000 per year, which is significantly lower than other professions which require specialized training and certification. According to Monster. com (2013), Connecticut is the best place for teachers in the United States: the state offers a generally high starting salary, but the cost of living is low enough to afford teachers the ability for a high standard of living.

It is clear from the statistics that individuals who become teachers do not do so because teaching is a very lucrative profession. Indeed, if the literature is to be believed, teachers suffer from overwork, particularly when they are working in the public school system in the United States (Ma and Macmillan, 1999). However, despite the fact that it is known that teaching is a thankless profession, new teachers are certified each year. Programs like Teach for America, a program that certifies new graduates as teachers and places them in needy school districts, have to turn down incredibly qualified applicants due to an excess of people applying to the program (LinkedIn. com, 2013). If teaching is such a thankless and underpaid profession, what drives people to the profession as a whole?

People's reasons for becoming teachers are varied, but the teachers who become excellent teachers are those individuals who become teachers because they genuinely love to teach. Enthusiasm in the teaching profession is important, and the teacher who burns out is the teacher who becomes ineffective in the classroom. People who make effective teachers are people who are gregarious and approachable without being too permissive; the teacher must have a method for connecting with children or young adults of the age that they prefer to teach. A teacher who prefers teaching teenagers, for example, will probably not excel with kindergarteners because of the varied teaching methods and levels of connection that the teacher must make with his or her students (Ebeling, 2013).

Some teachers may be driven to do different kinds of teaching as well. Teachers who specialize in special education or teaching students with disabilities may need further credentials; they also must possess an abundance of patience. Teaching special needs students or students with physical disabilities can be incredibly frustrating, but teachers who enter these specialized fields often report high levels of job satisfaction and happiness with their choice of career (Kauchak and Eggen, 2008). Kauchak and Eggen (2008) postulate that teachers who enter into specialized fields are more equipped to deal with problems that may arise within the classroom.

Similarly, teachers may choose to work in environments that are troubled economically. Children who grow up in rural or underprivileged environments often struggle with school and schoolwork, and frequently perform below grade level (Ma and Macmillan, 1999). Teachers who enter into these

environments may face frustrations in the classroom, and often do not have the financial resources to bring their classes to grade level.

Many teachers cite a desire to make a difference as a reason to become a teacher-- in fact, the reason is so often-cited that it has become a cliché. However, making a difference is fundamentally what teachers do, and cliché or not, it remains my motivation for becoming a teacher. Despite the frustrations and the struggles of teaching, the satisfaction received from seeing a struggling student succeed is unmatched by anything else in my life. While I've had many teachers in my life, the teachers who were excellent made a mark on me that has not faded over the years. It is my goal and my underlying motivation to make that kind of change and mark on as many students as I can while I remain as an educator.

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