UNE
UNIVERSITY OF
NEW ENGLAND

SiMERR

The National Centre of Science,
Information and Communication Technology,
and Mathematics Education
for Rural and Regional Australia

SiMERR

Early Career Teachers in Tasmania

Project Title	What are the Experiences of Early Career Science/Mathematics/ICT Teachers in Tasmania?
Project Team	Dr Natalie Brown, (SiMERR Tasmania), Alex van de Vusse, Lynda Kidd (University of Tasmania)
Period	2007 - 2008
Funding Agency	SiMERR
Organisational Base	SiMERR Tasmania

Description ⬆ Top

The context for this study is the increasing national and state emphasis on training and recruiting appropriately qualified teachers of science coupled with the concern over separation rates of new teachers. In Tasmania, this is being addressed partially through recruitment schemes for mathematics/science graduates, particularly targeting rural and isolated schools. The beginning teachers of 2007 have amongst them recipients of these graduate recruitment positions, which included an acceleration through the salary scale and opportunity for permanency.

Through a large-scale survey instrument and a parallel case study approach, this study is investigating the experiences of recently graduated science, mathematics and ICT teachers. Graduates from the University of Tasmania (UTAS) teacher education programs over the past five years were invited to participate in an on-line survey gathering data to identify specific issues faced by these teachers in their early years of teaching.

Four specific groups of teachers were invited to take part in short interviews. These groups were:

- All science, mathematics and ICT graduates from 2002-2006;
- All graduates who are teaching science, mathematics or ICT (and who did not complete the Secondary Science, Mathematics or ICT specialisations);
- All recipients of Graduate Recruitment positions; and
- All graduates whose first appointment was a rural or remote school.

Participants ⬆ Top

50 teachers

Findings ⬆ Top

The analysis of this project is still ongoing. However there are some trends from the initial analysis. All early career teachers acknowledged that their first year was a 'steep learning curve'. Although this would not be unusual for any graduate, interviews with rural and regional teachers identified issues that are less commonly found by teachers in metropolitan schools. One of these issues was that, with fewer staff in schools, they were called upon to take on responsibilities (such as subject coordination) in their first year of teaching. A number also reported needing to teach outside the area of subject expertise.

The prospect of achieving permanency was a key factor in influencing early career teachers to accept positions in rural and remote schools. Graduates also saw these appointments as providing opportunities to develop a range of skills that may not be available to early career teachers in metropolitan schools.

There were a variety of support structures offered to early career teachers in the schools in this study. Particularly effective strategies included formal induction processes for teachers, availability of information about the school and the district, regular meetings with senior staff, time release for reflection and peer feedback and opportunity to visit other schools. Mentoring was used in almost all schools, however this varied in effectiveness depending on the success of the mentoring relationship.

Outcomes ⬆ Top

- Brown, N.R. (in preparation). What are the experiences of our early career teachers?

Impact

The findings of this study are informing a review of the pre-service teaching courses at UTAS. How can teachers not only learn how to be teachers but also learn how to engage with and participate in the communities they work in?

A follow-up project intends to look at ways to work with communities to create induction programs for new teachers and look at ways of attracting and keeping teachers.

The experiences of early career teachers in regional areas are also similar to other professionals or workers. There is scope to work with employers in looking at strategies to help them retain their workers.

Related documents

Click here to download this infosheet.

Click here to download the report on this project.

Click here to visit this project's website.