

Early burnout puts heat on teacher education

October 7 2013



Monkey Business Image. Credit: Dreamstime.com

Teachers are at risk of burnout, even during their early career, according to a large-scale study looking at what motivates teachers and why their initial enthusiasm may be unable to be sustained.

In the [FIT-Choice project](#), Monash University researchers are continuing to track the experiences of 1651 future [teachers](#) from their entry into teacher education in 2002/3, until up to 7 years [teaching](#) so far. They are assessing which expectancies, values and goals are relevant for future teachers, what happens to their motivation after they enter the profession, how they cope, and the greatest risks for teachers' effectiveness and wellbeing.

Co-lead researcher Associate Professor Helen Watt from the Faculty of Education said teaching has long been recognised as a challenging and

rewarding occupation, but an increasingly stressful and demanding one.

"Concerningly, burnt-out and worn-out teachers comprise 27 per cent of our beginning teacher sample," Associate Professor Watt said.

"The reasons the majority of beginning teachers gave for becoming teachers were related to their perceived skills set, the intrinsic enjoyment they derived from teaching, the desire to make a social contribution and to work with youth.

"We have found these initial motivations impacted on professional engagement and their teaching style up to seven years later."

Associate Professor Watt said unfortunately these positive motivations often could not be sustained once the teachers started in working in the classroom.

"We found the inability to maintain these motivations was mainly due to perceived lack of schools' support, and even structural hindrances, such as heavy administrative and compliance demands which take their time and energy away from working with young people in classrooms, which is why many of them became teachers in the first place," Associate Professor Watt said.

When teachers had a high level of professional support, they were more effective and their sense of wellbeing improved.

Co-lead researcher Associate Professor Paul Richardson from the Faculty of Education said the research findings had implications for future teacher recruitment, preparation and induction.

"The research will provide valuable information on how we can assist teachers to achieve their goals and how best to equip them with

strategies to cope with the demands of teaching," Associate Professor Richardson said.

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Early burnout puts heat on teacher education (2013, October 7) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-10-early-burnout-teacher.html>

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