Chapter 1
Introduction

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Abstract This chapter establishes the importance of attracting and retaining quality teachers to the profession. The chapter outlines emerging international concerns about changes in the teacher labour market and the importance of promoting early career teacher retention as demand for teachers intensifies. The chapter outlines the structure of the book and briefly describes each chapter and the contributions they make to the overall aims of the book.

1.1 Introduction

Effective planning and management of the teacher workforce is an ongoing concern of governments and education systems due to the difficulties of predicting the impact of economic, demographic and social factors on teacher supply and demand. Even sophisticated attempts at modelling teacher supply and demand are confounded by unpredictable changes in:

- The age, gender and location of qualified teachers seeking employment
- The numbers enrolling in teacher education courses and attrition levels from those courses
- Teachers' retirement intentions and behaviour across different locations, schooling levels and subject fields
- 'Non-retirement separations' or teacher attrition rates
- Teacher mobility across, and migration into, different countries

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- Student enrolments at different locations and schooling levels and within different education systems
- Student subject choices

In this introductory chapter, we highlight the extent of the problem of teacher attrition by drawing on research from developed countries and OECD projections for developing countries. We do this to establish the underlying rationale for this book – that downward trends in the supply of teachers, coupled with dramatic rises in the demand for teachers, necessitate an urgent reappraisal of how schooling systems and individual schools can retain quality teachers. We examine why the problems associated with attracting and retaining teachers to the profession continue to exist despite efforts to address the problems. To do this, we focus on retention because it is one of the factors that is most responsive to positive intervention in the complex field of teacher workforce management.

The retention of teachers in the profession continues to be an important issue in many countries (Craig 2017). Concerns about teacher shortages, the costs associated with teacher attrition and the impact of high teacher turnover on student achievement dominate the literature (e.g. Sutcher et al. 2016). In particular, teacher attrition is a major social, economic and educational problem because:

- Educating teachers who leave the profession early is a wasteful and inefficient use of public funds.
- Educational funding is diverted from school resources and facilities to recruitment and replacement.
- Schools are destabilised and disrupted by high staff turnover.
- Schools lose the expertise of new, high-achieving graduates.
- Student learning is compromised.
- The individual's costs are high when graduates' personal and career aspirations and plans are thwarted due to a negative transition to the teaching profession.

A recent collation of international research on teacher attrition 'International teacher attrition: multiperspective views' (Craig 2017) reported research on why teachers leave the profession. Some of these studies reported that teachers leaving the profession might be a positive move on a personal level (Smith and Ulvik 2017; Yinon and Orland-Barak 2017). This builds on earlier research that examines the tensions between attrition as a form of personal resilience and the situated and systemic failures to better support teachers to meet their professional and personal requirements (Sullivan and Johnson 2012). However, as Kelchtermans (2017) argues, teacher attrition and retention are interconnected as an 'educational issue', and there is a 'need to prevent good teachers from leaving the job for the wrong reasons' (p. 961). This need to retain good teachers is more pressing because of a diminishing supply of teachers.

The problem of teacher supply is a worldwide issue. There are extensive media reports of a current and impending teacher supply crisis in Germany (Isenson 2018), Sweden (Local 2017), Australia (Smith 2018), the United States (Picchi 2018), New Zealand (Newshub Staff 2018) and England (Syal 2018). The issue is so serious that the OECD has published the following projections of anticipated teacher shortages:

> By 2030, countries must recruit a total of 68.8 million teachers: 24.4 million primary school teachers and 44.4 million secondary school teachers …
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> Of the 24.4 million teachers needed for universal primary education (UPE), 21 million will replace teachers who leave the workforce. The remaining 3.4 million, however, are additional teachers who are needed to expand access to school and underwrite education quality by reducing the numbers of children in each class to a maximum of 40.
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> The need for additional teachers is even greater at the secondary level, with a total of 44.4 million teachers need by 2030, of which 27.6 million are to replace those who leave and an additional 16.7 million to ensure that every pupil is in a classroom with no more than 25 students per teacher on average. (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2016, p. 1)

Whilst these figures are global projections, the nature and extent of teacher shortages vary across and within countries. There are teacher shortages in certain subjects, geographical areas, levels of schooling and in 'hard-to-staff' schools. For example:

- There are widespread shortages of mathematics and science teachers in England (Foster 2018), the United States (Sutcher et al. 2016), New Zealand (New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association 2018) and Australia (Weldon 2015).
- Countries like Germany are experiencing a shortage of primary school teachers (Isenson 2018).
- There are teacher shortages in 'hard-to-staff', low-SES schools in the United States (Sutcher et al. 2016), England (Foster 2018) and Australia (Weldon 2015).

The overall shortage of teachers is due to an increased demand for and decreased supply of teachers. A growing population is contributing significantly to the demand for more teachers in many countries (e.g. Sutcher et al. 2016; UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2016; Weldon 2015). Compounding the demand for more teachers is a waning supply of teachers because (a) fewer people are attracted to the profession of teaching (Bahr and Ferreira 2018; Foster 2018) and (b) too many teachers are leaving the profession before retirement (Sutcher et al. 2016). Overall, these supply and demand pressures are contributing to a shortage of teachers in many jurisdictions.

The problem of teacher attrition has been well researched, yet recently it has been argued that 'Teacher attrition, [is] a perennial problem receiving heightened attention due to its intensity, complexity, and spread' (Craig 2017, p. 859). Whilst the extent of teacher attrition in some countries is unclear due to inadequate datasets (den Brok et al. 2017; Weldon 2018), we understand many of the reasons for high attrition rates. In countries like Australia, for example, major policy changes have been introduced over the last decade. These include developing a national curriculum, implementing a National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and creating the 'My School' website to compare schools and results. More recent initiatives have targeted teacher quality and school performance. In many cases, these policy initiatives closely resemble those in other countries and constitute what Lingard (2014) calls 'policy plagiarism'. These changes have had a

profound effect on teachers and the conditions under which they work. There is now a greater emphasis in Australia on:

- School markets
- Test-based accountability
- Literacy and numeracy
- School 'winners' and 'losers'
- Criticism of teacher quality
- Performance pay
- School autonomy
- Undermining of the concept of public education (Graham 2013, p. 5)

These problems are shared in other countries, and they are compounded by cultural and structural issues. For example, teaching is largely recognised as a feminised profession and predominantly comprised of women (Moreau 2019). Moreau (2019) points to the body of research that has 'explored more specifically their career progression, including in relation to the conflicting relationship between paid and unpaid work and to how recruitment and promotion criteria and more broadly school cultures disadvantage women' (p. 5). She explains that the 'overall proportion of women in teaching fluctuates considerably across segments of the teaching labour market with, however, women consistently concentrating in the less prestigious and (financially) less rewarding segments' (p. 9).

A variety of studies of teachers' employment patterns and general welfare suggests that the effects of the problems for teachers have been profound. For example, in Australia:

- Up to 50% of new graduates leave the profession within 5 years of entry (Gallant and Riley 2014).
- Many low-SES and remote schools continue to be 'hard to staff' (Sullivan and Johnson 2012).
- The cost of mental health services for teachers doubled from 2010 to 2014 (ABC News 2015).
- Over a half of the teachers responding to a survey about student behaviour reported being stressed (Sullivan et al. 2013).

In times of teacher shortages, education systems 'cope' in a variety of ways by increasing class sizes (Sutcher et al. 2016), recruiting less qualified teachers (Foster 2018; Sutcher et al. 2016) and allocating teachers to teach outside of their field of expertise (Weldon 2016). Clearly, these ways of addressing a lack of teachers undermine the quality of education.

Governments have introduced policy initiatives that focus on increasing the teacher workforce by attending to the attraction of 'quality' teachers, but they have been criticised for not attending to teacher retention. For example, the government policy responses in many states in the United States, which are experiencing serious teacher shortages, have typically focused on new teacher recruitment and training, but there has been a lack of focus on retaining teachers (Sutcher et al. 2016). There have been moves to quickly recruit new teachers via 'employment-based pathways'

such as Teach for America. However, research indicates that such pathways are problematic because 'teachers with little preparation tend to leave at rates two to three times as high as those who have had a comprehensive preparation before they enter' (Sutcher et al. 2016, p. 4).

Governments that aim to develop and enact policy solutions that promote the retention of teachers need to understand the labour market and, more importantly, the complex relationship between retention and the development of the teaching workforce.

1.2 Early Career Teachers

In the context of teacher shortages, the gaze has turned to early career teachers because their attrition rates are high and there is a pressing need to retain them. Rather than dwell on the negative causes and consequences of high early career teacher attrition, this book builds on previous research which focused on the positive policy and practice contexts that support graduate teachers in their first years of teaching (e.g. Johnson et al. 2014, 2016; Sullivan and Johnson 2012; Sullivan and Morrison 2014).

In many countries, few concessions are given to early career teachers as they negotiate complex roles during their transition from their teacher education programs to the profession. Early career teachers are under increased pressure not only to be 'classroom ready' but also to perform at the same levels as more experienced colleagues. The focus has been on supporting them by providing induction programs, mentoring and extra release time from face-to-face teaching (Howe 2006; Sullivan and Morrison 2014). These types of support often position early career teachers as 'lacking' key knowledge and skills. Such a focus on the individual teacher ignores the broader contextual and systemic influences that are playing out across the teaching profession and reflects a growing preoccupation with deficit views of early career teachers (Day and Sachs 2004; Johnson et al. 2016).

Our earlier research showed that the nature of early career teachers' work threatens their retention as they transition to the profession (Johnson et al. 2016), and it needs to be reformed to 'address issues of intensification and performativity'. We explained:

> … common supports such as appointing mentors, providing induction programs and reducing teaching loads do not reframe early career teachers' work but locate them as the 'problem' and thus needing 'fixing'. This requires rethinking! Continuing to 'tinker' with the work of early career teachers will not suffice; rather, intellectual and collegial re-imagining of teachers' work is required. We need a much broader conversation around how we might begin the task of rethinking the nature of early career teachers' work. (p. 67)

This book challenges this type of thinking about early career teachers and their work. It offers a close and critical analysis of policies related to the work of early career teachers and how they are supported during this critical period of their working lives when they are vulnerable to being lost from the profession. It provides

good examples of practice which illustrate how early career teachers can be supported to transition into the profession in ways which are agentic for their development and which enable the profession as a whole to capitalise on the new knowledge and skills that these teachers bring to their classrooms and their students.

1.3 Assembling This Book

In 2015, we were conducting an Australian Research Council-funded project[1] to gain an understanding of the ways in which school leaders promote the retention of newly appointed teachers. As we were grappling with issues that were being debated internationally, we decided to bring together experts who could advance our research and ultimately the field of teacher development. In July 2015, we held a 3-day summit on 'Early career teacher retention: Bringing international perspectives from research to policy and practice' in Sydney, Australia. The summit was intended to be an innovative, provocative and question-raising forum addressing the pressing issue of teacher attrition and retention. The invited experts were asked to draft a chapter addressing some key provocations that drew on existing research and map possibilities for advancing the field. Two experts attending the summit were allocated to act as 'main reviewers' and the other experts acted as 'general reviewers'. In preparation for the summit, the main reviewers were asked to carefully examine the drafts and provide feedback addressing the following questions:

- Do you have any questions for the author/s?
- What do you like most about the chapter?
- What do you think is the main argument? Is the argument clear?
- What theoretical resources would you recommend?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
- In what ways will the chapter contribute to the overall theme of a book on teacher retention?

At the summit, the authors presented their chapters to the summit participants. The main reviewers provided their feedback, and this was followed by a roundtable discussion that involved a broader discussion about each chapter and its significance to the overall theme of the book. An allocated moderator for each chapter provided a summary of the main points for the author to consider for revision.

Following this intense review process at the early stage of conception, the authors then addressed the suggestions for improvement and resubmitted their chapters. As editors of the book, we embarked on a considered editorial process which led to further revisions of the chapters. The final accepted chapters form this book.

[1] The Retaining Quality Teachers Study was funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage Grant Scheme (LP130100830). See www.rqt.edu.au for further detail.

1.4 How This Book Is Organised

There are ten chapters in this book, organised in two parts.

1.4.1 Part I

The process of retaining early career teachers is difficult to define, because it is multifaceted and complex. A number of perspectives which embrace the interrelated processes of attraction, recruitment, induction and development of early career teachers are required to help better understand the problem and to shed light on new ways of considering theory, policy and practice. The chapters in Part I of the book consider these broad issues from an international perspective. They are intentionally provocative and challenge the normative and political nature of teaching and education. More specifically, the chapters examine how policies and practices impact on what happens in schools and what it means to be a teacher and to teach.

In Chap. 1, 'Introduction', we have explained why this book is important. We have also outlined the structure of the book and provided an overview of each chapter.

In Chap. 2, 'Unpacking Teacher Quality: Key Issues for Early Career Teachers', Maria Flores argues that the concept of 'teacher quality' is used extensively in educational discourse, but it is often very narrowly defined and used in simplistic ways. Flores reports on a large empirical study undertaken in Portugal to help understand the international issues related to teacher quality in the workforce. She argues that the 'view of teachers as leaders of learning lies at the heart of the view of teacher quality'. Importantly, Flores maintains that teacher quality needs to take account of political, social, professional and personal contexts.

In Chap. 3, '"Classroom-Ready Teachers": Gaps, Silences and Contradictions in the Australian Report into Teacher Education', Barry Down and Anna Sullivan present a critical policy analysis of a recent Australian report that claims that the quality of Australian teachers is being compromised by poor teacher preparation. They locate their analysis within a broader social context in which a 'manufactured crisis' over teacher quality is being played out in political circles and mainstream media. They identify the key values and assumptions inherent in the report and expose the contradictions within its policy discourses. Their examination of the dynamics of the 'conservative restoration' promoted in the report sheds light on the logic used to justify greater regulation, compliance and conformity in the field of teacher preparation.

In Chap. 4, 'Shifting the Frame: Representations of Early Career Teachers in the Australian Print Media', Nicole Mockler analyses two sets of Australian media texts to examine how early career teachers have been represented at different times in mainstream media. She identifies a significant change from a period in the late 1990s when early career teachers were implicated in hopeful attempts to address

problems in the teaching profession to the current era in which early career teachers are positioned as one of the causes of deficiencies in Australian schools. This shift in the representation of early career teachers as 'problems' is seen as the source of justifications for greater accountability, accreditation and regulation in teacher education.

In Chap. 5, 'Early Career Teachers and Their Need for Support: Thinking Again', Geert Kelchtermans identifies the pervasive deficit views about early career teachers. He argues that common teacher induction practices such as providing mentors are well intended but often have negative consequences. Kelchtermans maintains that new teachers enter the profession with strengths and experiences which should be valued. With this in mind, he offers three new ways to frame early career teachers: agentic, networked and an asset. This chapter challenges dominant thinking about early career teachers and what would help them as they transition to the profession, leading to their retention.

1.4.2 Part II

Rather than focus on how to 'fix' early career teachers, there is a need to reconsider the policies and practices that create the 'problem' and offer other ways forward. The chapters in the second part of the book draw on some of the bigger issues identified in the first part of the book and address the following key questions:

- What ideas dominate current thinking about practices relating to the retention of early career teachers?
- What are the policy drivers for current practices?
- What key ideologies justify these approaches?
- How can we present ethical alternatives to current approaches?

Each chapter addresses a theme related to the issue of early career teacher retention, contributing to a greater understanding of how we can rethink the work of early career teachers so that they can transition to the profession successfully.

In Chap. 6, 'How School Leaders Attract, Recruit, Develop and Retain the Early Career Teachers They Want: Positives and Paradoxes', Bruce Johnson, Anna Sullivan, Michele Simons and Judy Peters discuss how school leaders influence new teachers and foster their professional commitment. They identify the micropolitical activities that school leaders deliberately use to promote the engagement and retention of the early career teachers they want to keep. They present data and analyses which reveal the dilemmas and paradoxes that school leaders encounter when they attempt to reconcile the competing demands of different stakeholders in the staffing process. They contrast the mostly benevolent actions of leaders with their often-unintended consequences to establish the need for ongoing critical reflection about the impact on early career teachers of taken-for-granted human resources processes.

In Chap. 7, 'Reforming Replacement Teaching: A Game Changer for the Development of Early Career Teaching?', Barbara Preston exposes the parlous conditions early career teachers experience when they enter the profession as temporary replacement teachers. She implicates poor pay and conditions and low professional status as factors that contribute to high levels of early career teacher attrition. She argues for the 'professionalisation of replacement teaching' involving a number of interrelated strategies designed to position relief teaching as a desirable option for experienced teachers. Linked to this is her controversial call for early career teachers to be denied entry to the profession through replacement teaching by regulating and reorganising the forms and areas of work open to early career teachers.

In Chap. 8, 'Connecting Theory and Practice: Collaborative Figured Worlds', Jamie Sisson offers a critique of the dominant pre-service teacher education model, which promotes an artificial and contrived distinction between educational theory and practice. She explores the sources of the theory–practice divide by examining the values and assumptions that underpin the dominant discourses used in teacher education programs. She proposes a more collaborative approach that breaks down barriers between pre-service teaching students, school-based teachers and university teacher educators. She argues that positioning these actors as 'co-learners' and 'co-educators' challenges deficit perceptions of pre-service teachers and promotes a more ethical alternative to contemporary, university-based teacher education.

In Chap. 9, 'Recruiting, Retaining and Supporting Early Career Teachers for Rural Schools', Simone White examines a policy mechanism aimed at attracting and recruiting teachers to difficult-to-staff schools in rural Australia. She argues that incentives are often used to attract and retain teachers, but that they ignore the nature of rural contexts and might actually exacerbate the overall problems faced by rural schools. White challenges negative views of rural schools and repositions them as sites that have rich benefits for early career teachers. She argues that pre-service teacher education should raise awareness of the benefits of working in rural schools. This chapter has important implications for understanding the complexities of the attraction, recruitment, development and retention process more broadly.

In Chap. 10, 'Quality Retention and Resilience in the Middle and Later Years of Teaching', Christopher Day provides us with a reasoned and timely reminder that the quality of the teaching profession does not reside solely with the newest entrants to the profession. He argues that retention, in and of itself, is not sufficient to ensure a quality teaching workforce; instead, he makes a case for quality retention based on an enriched notion of teacher resilience. This form of resilience does not just embrace the innate capacities of individual teachers; it is both a psychological and sociocultural phenomenon which can enable teachers to move from 'coping' to managing and having the 'bounce back' required to meet the intellectual and emotional challenges that make up teachers' work. This chapter is important for the insights it offers for those concerned with developing and nurturing resilience as part of quality retention processes for teachers.

1.5 Summary

This book aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the issues related to the retention of teachers, particularly early career teachers. The chapters examine how policies and practices impact on what happens in schools and what it means to be a teacher and teach. Their insights into the issue of retention contribute to a greater understanding of how we can rethink the work of early career teachers so that they can transition to the profession successfully.

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