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Title: The World Language Teacher Shortage: Taking a New Direction

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The World Language Teacher Shortage: Taking a New Direction

Introduction

In Fall 2017, the National Center for Educational Statistics (2017) reported that approximately 50.7 million K-12 students entered US public elementary and secondary schools. An additional 5.2 million students were expected to matriculate into private schools. While the number of students is growing, “enrollment in teacher education programs is down significantly—falling 35% nationwide in the last five years” (Long, 2016, p. 1). School districts are scrambling to find certified teachers, especially in WLS (Hanford, 2017; Motoko, 2015; Koerting, 2017), and are turning to hiring people on emergency credentials where these individuals test ideas by “trial and error, one day at a time” (Gosner, 2016, p. 1). World languages is a content area known for a myriad of academic benefits from strengthening cognitive processes (Kormi-Nouri, Moniri, & Nilsson, 2003; Stewart, 2005) to developing students’ print awareness (Bialystok, 1997), and reading ability in the early years (D’Angiulli, Siegel, & Serra, 2001) to higher academic achievement on standardized tests (Armstrong & Rogers, 1997; Turnbull, Hart, & Lapkin, 2003). Having uncertified teachers in the classroom testing hypotheses about teaching and student learning undermines student achievement (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016).

Unfortunately, in the case of world language (WL) teachers, the shortage has been a serious issue for decades (Swanson, 2008, 2014). Following World War II, the President of the United States Dwight D. Eisenhower, along with Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson, called international attention to the shortage of WL teachers (Flattau, Bracken, Van Atta, Bendeh-Ahmadi, de la Cruz, & Sullivan; Ray, 1978). Later, in the 1980s, a severe teacher shortage in America’s schools was reported (Darling-Hammond, 1984; National Academy of Sciences, 1987) and WL teachers as well as those teaching bilingual education were found to be in the most need in the 1983-84 survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (Boe & Gilford, 1992).

At the turn of the century, Murphy, DeArmand, and Guin (2003) found that WL teaching positions appeared to be the most difficult to fill, well above the other teacher shortage areas of special education, math, and science. A few years later, Tom Carroll, President of the *National Commission on Teaching and America's Future*, reported that more than half of America's teachers were Baby Boomers, and that these individuals would be eligible for retirement soon, in effect causing a teacher retirement tsunami (Der Bedrosian, 2009). In 2017, a national report commissioned by the US Congress cited that 44 states and the District of Columbia reported difficulties hiring enough teachers to meet WL curriculum demands—more than any other subject (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2017), which corroborated a report by the United States Department of Education (2011).

While problematic in the US, the issue is globally pervasive as researchers in Australia (Weldon, 2015), Canada (Canadian Parents for French British Columbia & Yukon Branch, 2015; Rushowy, 2015), United Kingdom (Nuffield Foundation, 2000), and New Zealand (Richards, Conway, Roskvist, & Harvey, 2012) noted shortages of language teachers. The shortage of WL has also been well covered in western media (Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2016a).

A review of the literature shows that the shortages are a complex combination of factors, which are a product of the unique circumstances of each individual and the unique sociocultural, political, and educational contexts of each country. From a US standpoint, Swanson (2010, 2012) identified five factors that account for the shortage: retirement, attrition, student enrollments, legislation, and perceptions of the profession. Citing the issue from a Canadian perspective, Karsenti, Collin, Villeneuve, Dumouchel, and Roy (2008) attribute the shortage of French teachers to four factors: task-related (e.g., classroom management issues and working conditions), individual (e.g., teachers' emotional / psychological states), social (e.g., teachers' lack of collaboration, poor relations with administrators), and socioeconomic factors (e.g., salary). In Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, the shortage in part can be explained by the fact that WL education is not widely valued (Ashton, 2015; Liddicoat, 2010; Worne, 2015), and while various policies in the past have mandated or at least encouraged the teaching and learning of a WL in primary schools, the uptake of students beyond any compulsory years is low (Liddicoat, 2010; New Zealand Government, 2014; Rodeiro, 2016). Several studies have shown that a lack of value manifests itself in a variety of ways which challenge WL teachers, including a lack of resources, a lack of time and space dedicated to the subject area, professional isolation, and difficulties in developing relationships with members of the school community (Mason, 2015; Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2016b). While WL teachers can certainly empathize with current state-of-affairs, teacher attrition and retention are two main and costly factors (Phillips, 2015), and long-term solutions that “focus on recruitment and retention can ease the shortage while also prioritizing student learning and a strong teacher workforce” (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016, p. 6).

Teacher Recruitment Efforts

In order to arrest the decline of WL teachers, the authors advocate that priority must be given to active recruitment and retention at the local level. From a US national perspective, for years educator recruitment programs such as *Recruiting National Teachers, Inc.*, *Teach for America*, *Troops to Teachers*, and *Teacher Cadets* have aimed to increase the number of teachers regardless of content area by focusing on individuals who are about to enter the job market (Teach for America) or to leave the military (Troops to Teachers). However, little has been reported about their success to help overcome the teacher shortage, especially in WL teaching (Swanson, 2012). In Australia, like many countries trying to shore up shortages with native speakers, attempts were made to increase the supply of teachers by recruiting overseas-trained teachers. Specifically, the program would allow qualified WL teachers an expedited migration process through the skilled migrant visa scheme. However, after two years the program resulted in the recruitment of only 15 applications, which included teachers of other in-demand disciplines including mathematics and science (Nancarrow, 2015).

However, data from the local level efforts show promise. In Wyoming, Swanson (2011) reported that undergraduate students' misperceptions about the WL teaching profession could be changed by confronting their perceptions with factual data. Results showed that after learning more about the profession, the WL teacher education program quadrupled in enrollment. Another initiative created more than a decade ago, in Georgia, the *Double the Double* initiative sought to double the number and diversity of teacher education graduates, in particular Pre K-12 WL teachers (Georgia State University, 2005). Grounded in the theoretical underpinnings of the person/workplace environment fit (Holland, 1997) and conceptual change (Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1982; Strike & Posner, 1982), recruiting efforts focused on identifying high school and undergraduate students with second language ability, and presenting them with factual information about becoming a teacher and teaching languages (Swanson & Moore, 2006). Since its inception in 2006, the program director for the WL Teacher Preparation Program noted that enrollments and the diversity of the students in the program nearly tripled (Swanson, 2012).

Working from a grow-your-own teacher perspective, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages recently partnered with Educators Rising (2017), a US-based organization focused on working with adolescents to provide hands-on teaching experience helping them sustain interest and cultivate skills to become successful WL teachers. The nationwide initiative seeks to have in-service high school classroom teachers identify and induct language learners into the profession. At present, the curriculum is being developed and is to be pilot tested in school districts in North Carolina and several other states. Research has shown the value of working locally to change students misperceptions about becoming a teacher and recruiting the next generation of WL teachers (Swanson & Moore, 2006).

In other parts of the world (e.g., Canada), while there have been calls for better recruitment initiatives, there is little evidence of active and sustainable measures to increase the numbers coming into the profession (Swanson & Huff, 2010). Given the success of several small-scale and successful initiatives in the United States, we call for collaboration among

associations and even countries and more development of active efforts and reporting of their progress and successes.

Teacher Retention Efforts

In the US, approximately 40-50% of novice teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014a), which corroborates earlier research (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002). In other parts of the world, such as the United Kingdom, approximately 31% of beginning teachers were still employed five years after entering the classroom (National Union of Teachers, 2017). Such attrition in the US alone costs up to \$8 billion each year (Sutcher et al., 2016). In the UK, schools are forced to spend considerably on advertising and headhunters' fees amid what they are calling the "worst teacher recruitment crisis in memory" (Hurst, 2015, p. 1). In an environment where teachers are already leaving the profession at an alarming rate, the case for WL education is even more concerning, considering that attrition is arguably intensified in the case of WL teachers (Mason, 2017). For example, in the US, WL teacher attrition rates in North Carolina (22%) and Georgia (11%) were found to be higher than the rate of attrition for teachers in other content areas (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2006; Konanc, 1996; Swanson & Huff, 2010). In fact, in North Carolina, veteran WL teachers left the profession in higher numbers than novice teachers, especially in the tenth year (49%) and the fifteenth year (57%) on the job (Konanc, 1996).

For years, Richard Ingersoll and his colleagues (Ingersoll, 2001, 2003; Ingersoll & May, 2010; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014) have noted that teacher recruitment programs will not solve the teacher shortage unless they also address low teacher retention. One such attempt to address the challenges in retaining experienced WL teachers was the *Language Teacher Retention Project* at the Center for Urban Language Teaching and Research at Georgia State University (2017). After an initial roundtable that helped to identify strategies to effectively support WL teachers during the first year of the project, a series of workshops for teachers were given the second year to in-service WL teachers in order to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to support them in the field, as well as to initiate professional mentoring networks which would continue beyond the workshops, through videoconferences. The project was considered a success by the participants and workshop leaders per exit surveys (M. Wagner, Personal communication, June 15, 2017), but funding was cut the third year.

There are many examples of projects, programs, and initiatives in the US and internationally, which aim to support teachers in the field, particularly those in the early part of their careers when teacher attrition is egregious. As Perda (2013) reported, more than 42% of new teachers leave teaching within five years of entry and, moreover, there is a steady increase in beginning teacher attrition over the past 2 decades (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2013). However, there is limited political drive in many countries to acknowledge and address the attrition of teachers, and even less so in the case of WL teachers. The lack of resourcing and funding of active and

long-term projects to properly address one of the major problems facing WL education is in stark contrast to the political rhetoric espoused by those same governments, about the importance of WL education for the economic and social prosperity of its people. For the most part, the current discourse has remained stalled at local research studies (Mason, 2017) and public discussions about what the problems are, and what might be done to address them (Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2016a). As in the case of recruitment, the development of long-term, evidence-based approaches to address WL teacher attrition, which are supported through adequate funding and a clear implementation and evaluation strategy, elude most jurisdictions.

Change of Strategy

In order to address the imbalance in supply and demand, an innovative approach to attract and retain WL teachers is needed (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012). However, such a grand endeavor to increase the quantity of WL teachers is in the hands of multiple stakeholders and requires active rather than passive participation. We have identified multiple stakeholders who are in a position to make a significant difference in growing the supply of WL teachers and have advanced ideas that each can implement immediately.

World Language Teachers

In-service teachers can play a unique role in building capacity because they are at the forefront of language education. On a daily basis WL teachers interact with language learners, some of whom are potential WL teachers of the future. Thus, WL teachers can assist by identifying individuals at the secondary level, who have a love and a propensity of language learning. Tapping the right candidates and pointing them in the right direction to getting sufficient information about careers in WL education can pay dividends, because research shows that people tend to return within 15 to 40 miles of where they were raised (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wycoff, 2005). Furthermore, in-service teachers are in an important position to help support each other through challenges which may otherwise lead them to leave their jobs, as research shows the important role that human connections play in the retention of WL teachers (Mason, 2017). Beginning at the local level and from an international perspective, in-service WL teachers can contribute to the improvement of the supply of teachers by:

1. Identifying the most capable students (Darling-Hammond, 2017) with a love and a propensity of language learning, the first step to recruitment;
2. Providing those students with information on becoming a WL teacher and/or putting them in contact with a WL teacher program coordinator in higher education;
3. Mentoring student teachers in order to enable them to experience the challenges and opportunities of being a WL teacher first hand;

4. Serving as a volunteer mentor to provide moral and practical support (e.g., resources, advice) to other teachers in the field, particularly those at the early stages of their careers, or those who might be struggling and consider leaving the field;
5. Advocating for better working and program conditions that will help WL teaching become a more attractive career option.

School Administrators

Next, school administrators are also in a strong position to affect the supply of WL teachers. Studies have shown for years that effective school leadership is associated with teachers' decisions to remain at or leave their schools (e.g., Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wycoff, 2011; Grissom, 2011; Jaussi & Dionne, 2004; Kim, 2002; Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2016). Working conditions also play a role, and the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (2005) has advocated for the improved program conditions in Australia, noting that "accomplished language teaching can only occur in an appropriate and supportive teaching context" (p. 7). In terms of salary, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2012) reported that teachers' salaries have risen over the past decade but "a teacher with 15 years' experience earns an average of only 80% of the full-time earnings of a 25-64 year-old with tertiary qualifications" (p. 1)-- qualifications from having completed any form of postsecondary learning. Additionally, the OECD (2014) warns that uncompetitive salaries make it much more challenging to attract the best candidates to the teaching profession. Administrators must be accountable for the quality of language programs in their schools, and the working conditions of their WL teachers. Proactive work can only help increase the visibility and social status of WL teaching, both of which have helped Finland rise to a level of global esteem for its education (OECD, 2012). We strongly urge administrators to advocate for language teaching by:

1. Systematically developing ways to increase teachers' salaries for high needs areas such as WLs, and to attract high quality applicants;
2. Ensuring that WL programs, as a core subject as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), are given the time, resources and space to facilitate effective language learning;
3. Ensuring that WL teachers are given sufficient time to plan effective lessons, including removing burdensome administrative requirements;
4. Providing more specialized professional development and networking opportunities for WL teachers instead of generic offerings;
5. Recognizing the efforts of great WL teachers, and provide opportunities for them to take on leadership roles in schools.

Parents and Community Members

Education is a collective effort and parental involvement affects many aspects of a successful school such as attendance rates, improved students' social skills, graduation rates, and even postsecondary attendance (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002). Additionally, "creating a partnership between schools and parents can have a significant impact on student achievement" (Center for Public Education, 2011, p. 4). Such efforts can engage the larger community to build support for changes in educational policy such as improving the conditions that support teacher retention. As discussed earlier, language learning has been shown empirically to lead to improved student achievement. Parents can be powerful allies in overcoming the teacher shortage by becoming active agents by

1. Advocating for sustained increases in teachers' salaries and improved resources and funding for language teaching;
2. Asking school administrators about the details of WL programs;
3. Creating an advocacy group of like-minded parents, with the Canadian Parents for French (2017) providing an example of successful parent-led advocacy.

Teacher Education Providers

Pre-service education is vitally important in developing in new teachers the skills and knowledge they will need not only to survive in the field, but also to thrive (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014). Teacher education should emphasize the unique nature of language as an area of instruction, recognizing that it is not traditional content like other disciplines. Because almost all contemporary approaches focus on proficiency and communicative ability, appropriate methods informed by second language research should form the basis of teacher education. Research has shown a range of discipline-specific beliefs that can predict retention of language teachers, including helping students at introductory levels of language instruction, confidence to teach cultural knowledge, and classroom management (Swanson, 2012). Further, language teachers face a range of extra challenges emanating from a lack of value for the discipline in wider western society, challenges that WL teachers need to be prepared to face (Mason, 2017). May (2010) argued that "a failure in teacher training to prepare (language) teachers for the distractive forces they will encounter working against teaching and learning productivity carries the great danger of career frustration" (p. 21), and this in turn may lead to increased rates of attrition. Wilkerson (2000) suggested that a sound program of lesson observation and classroom experience in language classrooms is essential to prepare language teachers. Pre-service educators and program coordinators and institutions can help to prepare WL teachers for their careers by:

1. Providing dedicated training for WL teachers that integrates second language acquisition research and pedagogy and strong language proficiency;

2. Providing in-field experiences with quality and qualified WL teachers so that teachers have multiple opportunities to apply their developing skills and knowledge;
3. Encouraging the selection of WL teacher education applicants that have a vocational personality pattern that is associated with efficacious teaching (Swanson, 2013);
4. Developing more proactive initiatives for the recruitment of appropriate candidates to WL education courses;
5. Encouraging pre-service teachers to engage with local, state, regional, and national teachers' associations so that they can build a support network before they enter the field.

Language Teacher Associations

Language Teacher Associations (LTAs) provide 'empowering spaces' for language teachers, conceptualized as "networks of professionals, run by and for professionals, focused mainly on support for members, with knowledge exchange and development as well as representation of members' views as their defining functions" (Lamb, 2012, p. 295). LTAs are engaging in a range of advocacy and promotional activities to promote quality language education in schools across the world. In addressing the issue of teacher supply specifically, LTAs can help by:

1. Providing induction to potential secondary students, such as the ACTFL / Educators Rising initiative or by offering extracurricular activities such as college visits where secondary students can visit classes and talk with program faculty about becoming a teacher firsthand;
2. Developing materials for teachers to disseminate and share information with secondary school students who show interest and promise in language teaching;
3. Keeping a database of language teachers with different areas of expertise, who can contact each other for support and advice;
4. Allowing free membership and conference registration to pre-service teachers to encourage future membership and engagement with the wider language education community;
5. Promoting language education through the media, and particularly the issue of teacher supply, which at present is represented in a superficial manner in international media (Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2016).

Policymakers

Many of the current policies around the world in relation to WL education are symbolic in nature. While setting out a blueprint for the future direction of WL education is an integral part of the policy process, if the desire is to build a nation of citizens who are able to engage economically and socially in an increasingly global world, there is a need to take one step further

and develop substantive policies, particularly when it comes to building teacher supply. The days of simply ringing the bell about the shortage needs to end. WL teacher sustainability needs active efforts building on current research and comprehensive data, with clear implementation goals, and dedicated funding and leadership. Such efforts include:

1. Funding longitudinal studies and programs which aim to understand and build the supply of language teachers;
2. Looking to other countries and jurisdictions for models of success;
3. Making explicit demands of schools in terms of how they implement, fund, and manage WL programs;
4. Providing bonuses or subsidies to teachers with the relevant skills and knowledge, to move into WL teaching positions;
5. Providing WL teachers with time to engage in professional development and networking.

Conclusions

Since the end of World War II, international leaders have been calling attention to the issue of the WL teacher shortage. However, few active initiatives have begun and sustained. We strongly advocate that what is needed to address this complex and ingrained problem is not the ringing of more alarm bells, but action. The chronic shortage of WL teachers has negatively impacted the quality and standing of WL education programs in the US and internationally for many years. As with all complex social issues, the solution lies not just with one answer and one group, but with a multi-faceted approach involving all of the stakeholders making their own important contributions. Initiatives to improve recruitment are futile if teachers choose to leave after a short amount of time in the classroom; teacher retention must be addressed actively. We wholeheartedly advocate that the best approach is longitudinal, supporting future teachers from the time they start to consider their future career options, during their pre-service training, while transitioning into the profession, and throughout their careers. The days of leaving colleges of education's doors open and hoping that people pass through them needs to end. While ideas have been advanced here, we call for planning, collaboration, and the development of active approaches that may contribute to strengthening the number of those wanting to enter and enjoy a long and successful career as WL teachers.

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