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## Demystifying the Mystery of Second Career Teachers' Motivation to Teach

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## Demystifying the Mystery of Second Career Teachers' Motivation to Teach

### Abstract

Within the field of education, there has been much discussion regarding what prompts the career change of second career teachers. This study examines motivational factors that influence second career teachers' decision to teach and how their previous careers influence their teaching experience. The theoretical framework that acts as foundational platform is the Expectancy Theory. The study utilized a qualitative approach. Data was collected using focus groups and analyzed utilizing open coding consistent with Corbin and Strauss (2010). The results of the study revealed that most participants were intrinsically motivated to transition to the teaching profession.

### Keywords

Second Career Teachers, Intrinsic, Extrinsic, Motivation

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## Demystifying the Mystery of Second Career Teachers' Motivation to Teach

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*Within the field of education, there has been much discussion regarding what prompts the career change of second career teachers. This study examines motivational factors that influence second career teachers' decision to teach and how their previous careers influence their teaching experience. The theoretical framework that acts as foundational platform is the Expectancy Theory. The study utilized a qualitative approach. Data was collected using focus groups and analyzed utilizing open coding consistent with Corbin and Strauss (2010). The results of the study revealed that most participants were intrinsically motivated to transition to the teaching profession. Keywords: Second Career Teachers, Intrinsic, Extrinsic, Motivation*

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It is often taken as self-evident that teachers can and do make a difference by influencing the lives of children and adolescent and their orientation to learning (Richardson & Watt, 2006). On this premise, it is paramount that only the best and most qualified teachers are hired for the profession by the educational system within any country. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; 2005) report emphasizes that the "teaching profession needs to be competitive with other occupations in attracting talented and motivated people" (p. 39). As a result of this report, many countries are now realizing how critical it is to have an educational system equipped with qualified teachers and are encouraging individuals with existing occupations to transition to the teaching profession (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003; Richardson & Watt, 2005).

Subsequently, there has been much discussion regarding who is considered to be the more qualified teacher, whether they are teachers that are younger, motivated and recently graduated from college or second career teachers who are older and more equipped with professional and real world experience. Despite the difference in teacher's entry to the profession as first career teachers or second career teachers, it is imperative that the emphasis be placed on minimizing the attrition rate of teachers and implementing strategies to retain qualified teachers. According to Darling-Hammond (2001) there are a number of factors that contribute to approximately 30% of teachers leaving the teaching profession within the first three years of teaching. Such factors include: limited training and education of teachers to address the demands within the learning environment, poor salary, lack of mentoring, sink-or-swim mentality and difficult administrative tasks.

As much emphasis is being placed on second career teachers, it is imperative to know what motivational factors are associated with their decision to transition to the teaching profession from their previous careers, possible motivational or influential factors that would result in them leaving the teaching profession, and exactly how they can utilize their experiences from their previous careers within the classroom environment to promote and enhance the learning process.

### Purpose Statement and Study Significance

The purpose of this study is three-fold. First, it was intended to identify and examine possible motivational factors associated with the decision of second career teachers to

transition from their previous careers to the teaching profession. Secondly, to identify and examine the perceptions of second career teachers' motivational factors associated with their decision to return to their previous career or another career. Lastly, to examine second career teachers' perception of how their previous career can enhance their teaching experience.

This study is significant because it can provide great insight regarding designing teacher education programs conducive for second career teachers. Further, it provides a platform for providing supplemental knowledge which can be beneficial in the recruitment and retention of second career teachers. These second career teachers are not only qualified academically, but are equipped with practical real world experience, which would enhance the learning experience meanwhile filling the void for the need for teachers in the educational system. To this end, it is paramount that teacher education programs are designed reflective of adult learning principles which would provide a foundation for teachers to incorporate their prior experiences in the classroom.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guide this research are:

1. What are motivational factors associated with second career teachers' decisions to transition to the teaching profession?
2. What are the perceived motivational factors associated with second career teachers' decisions to leave the teaching profession?
3. What are second career teachers' perceptions of how their previous careers can influence their teaching experience?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that acts as a lens to illuminate this study is the Expectancy theory, originally introduced by Vroom (1964) specific to the work environment. However, this theory was later expanded, enhanced and amalgamated a multiplicity of components within the workplace and employees (Porter & Lawler, 1968; Pinder, 1987; Champagne & McAfee, 1989; Robbins, 1993; Conroy, Caldwell, Buehrer, & Wolfe, 1997). Dissimilar from the need theories (Alderfer, 1972; Herzberg, 1968; Maslow, 1970; McClelland, 1976), Vroom's Expectancy Theory focal point is not specifically what motivates an individual but rather, provides a platform regarding the process of cognitive variables that reflects individual differences in work motivation. Therefore, "expectancy theory holds that people are motivated to behave in ways that produce desired combinations of expected outcomes" (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1999, p.227). Further, Vroom's theory assumes that the "choices made by a person among alternative courses of action are lawfully related to psychological events occurring contemporaneously with the behavior" (Vroom, 1964, p. 15). In other words, an individual's behavior results from conscious choices among alternatives, and these choices are systematically related to psychological processes, particularly perception and the formation of beliefs and attitudes (Pinder, 1984). Likewise within this current study, second career teachers conscious choice to transition to the teaching profession compared to other professional alternatives is lawfully related to psychological events (e.g., intrinsic motivation) occurring contemporaneously with the behavior. Further, Vroom's expectancy theory espoused that a "momentary belief concerning the likelihood that a particular act will precede a particular outcome" (p. 17). Hence second career teachers' decision to teach influencing job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation. On this premise, the Vroom's Expectancy Theory serves as the theoretical framework for this study.

## **Background Information**

### **Qualities of Second Career Teachers**

Individuals entering the teaching profession usually do so after successfully completing a bachelor of education degree and therefore utilizing the traditional method of entry to teaching. These individuals are referred to as a first career teacher. Subsequently, there are some individuals who opt to enter the teaching profession later after working within a prior profession unrelated to education. These individuals are referred to as the second career teachers (Powell, 1997). There has been many discussions regarding the benefits of second career teachers and their experience in the content area compared to first career teachers. Many stakeholders are also of the belief that second career teachers would enhance the quality of schools and by extension the educational system (Education and Training Committee, 2005; Graham, 2004; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, 2007). Additionally, second career teachers are equipped with qualities of maturity, life experience, motivation, work knowledge from previous careers that are transferable to the classroom environment (DEST, 2000; Education and Training Committee, 2005; Graham, 2004; Green, 2005; Kenny, 2000; Richardson, Gough & Vitlin, 2001; Skilbeck & Connell, 2004). Conversely, Chamber (2002) purports that although second career teachers are equipped with unique qualities that can be beneficial to the educational system; these individuals also require more support throughout the teacher preparation programs and bring specific challenges to their schools and training programs.

### **Motivational Factors Associated with Second Career Teachers**

The transition to the teaching profession after numerous years in a previous career is a unique professional experience which has underlying motivational factors associated with the transition. The question of whether the transition is inspired intrinsically or extrinsically has been the question of much discussion. Many studies have reported that second career teachers are intrinsically and altruistically motivated despite numerous researchers identifying three broad categories for second career teaching motivation (Brown, 1992; Kyriacou, Kunc, Stephens, & Hultgren, 2003; Moran, Kilpatrick, Abbot, Dallat, & McClune, 2001).

Numerous researchers conducted studies on motivational factors that influence second career teachers' decision or first career teachers or teachers' in general decision to teach and there was an apparent overarching theme regarding the variation with intrinsic motivational factors. They included family-friendly working conditions, security and flexibility of employment were important for many people, whereas financial considerations and social status were less important (Richardson & Watt, 2006); lifestyle consideration and working conditions (Manuel & Hughes, 2006); desire to make a change and to pursue meaningful work (Lerner & Zittman, 2002); helping or influencing pupils and emotional satisfaction (Scow & Forrest, 1994). Conversely, Hobsen et al. (2004) study revealed that second career teachers were extrinsically motivated, and factors such as extended holiday, job security, and status of teaching profession motivated their career change. Despite the variation among the studies, there is evidently a gap in the literature as most studies either focused in the United States, United Kingdom or Australia. Further, there is limited literature on this topic within the Caribbean and by extension the Bahamas. To this end, it is the intention that this study would address the apparent gap in the literature from a Caribbean perspective regarding what are possible motivational factors that influence second career teachers to teach. Secondly, what are the perceived motivational factors that would result in second career teachers

leaving the teaching profession. Lastly, how second career teachers previous professional experience can enhance their teaching experience.

## **Methods**

### **Study Setting**

Established in 1974 by an Act of Parliament, The College of the Bahamas is the premier tertiary level institution within the Bahamas. Currently, the College of the Bahamas has six academic units which host a variety of schools. Specifically, within the School of Education, there are 16 programs in secondary education with corresponding diploma of education programs and three programs concentrating on primary education. Prospective teachers have the option of qualifying themselves as a teacher either via the Bachelor of Education program or the Diploma Program. To be a candidate within the Diploma of Education, candidates must be equipped with a minimum of a bachelor's degree with the view of teaching in that specific area. The diploma program attracts second career teachers who do not necessarily have a degree in teaching but are desirous of qualifying as a teacher. Upon successful completion of the program, candidates are certified teachers.

### **Research Design**

The research methodology used in this study was qualitative, incorporating the phenomenological technique. This approach was utilized because it is a method used in qualitative research that aims to define ways in which people experience, understand, perceive, and conceptualize a phenomenon (Marton, 1981; Marton & Booth, 1997; Ashford & Lucas, 1998; Richardson, 1999). Further, because all individuals experience phenomena in different ways depending on culture and context, phenomenology seeks to describe the world as others experience it.

### **Data Collection**

The method of data collection was via two focus groups interviews which utilized preset questions outlined by the researcher. The focus group was facilitated by the researcher and an assistant who assisted with making relevant notes according to guiding principles of focus group interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2008). The focus groups lasted approximately an hour each and were audio recorded. Prior to the focus groups, participants of the study were informed of their rights to part-take in the study and data being collected. Additionally, participants were asked to complete a participant demographic sheet and were assigned random numbers to ensure anonymity. On completion of the focus groups, the recordings were immediately transcribed verbatim and compared with the notes made by the assistant.

### **Data Analysis**

Analysis was conducted through the process of open coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin 2010). Working within the research structure provided by the research objectives and the theoretical framework, transcribed data was qualitatively analyzed through open coding to establish themes and main concepts. Recurring topics in the text were recognized as themes and sub-themes. A table of central themes and sub-themes was constructed. This process allowed a deeper understanding and explanation of issues that were being studied. To ensure greater validity a peer reviewer read through the data to

ensure themes and categories corresponded with the research questions. The findings were synthesized according to the aspects of perceptions of factors that motivate second career teachers (entry and exit) and how their previous career can influence their teaching experience.

## Participants

Utilizing random sampling, a group of second career teachers ( $n = 18$ ) were recruited, who met the following inclusion criteria: either currently enrolled (but extensive teaching internship) or recently graduated from the Diploma in Education Program at the local community college; must have been employed in their first career for a minimum of five years; and must have obtained a bachelors degree from an accredited institution. All participants were informed of their rights and give consent to participate in the study. See table 1 for participant demographic information.

**Table 1.** Participant Demographic Information

Variable	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Male	4	22
Female	14	78
Age Level		
21-30	8	44
31-40	7	40
41-50	2	11
51-60	1	5
Educational Level		
Bachelors	14	78
Masters	4	22
Professional Experience		
5 years	3	16
6-10 years	9	50
11-15 years	0	0
16-20 years	2	11
21-25 years	2	11
26 years or over	1	5
Prior Career		
Agriculture Science	1	5
Business	5	28
Chef	1	5
Financial Industry	6	33
Forensic Science Officer	1	5
Guidance Counselor	1	5
Legal Administrative Assistant	1	5
Plumber	1	5
Priest	1	5
Television Director	1	5

Note.  $N = 18$

## Findings

**Research Question 1.** What are motivational factors associated with second career teachers' decision to transition to the teaching profession?

The results from the study revealed that second career teachers are motivated intrinsically rather than extrinsically to transition to the teaching profession. Upon analysis of the data collected, the following themes emerged as the most prominent among teachers'

responses in regards to the motivational factors associated with their decision to transition to the teaching profession (a) civic duties and responsibilities, (b) work and life balance, (c) personal influence, (d) passion to teach, and (e) desire to be a change agent. See table 2 outlining major themes that emerged regarding motivational factors associated with second career teachers' decisions to transition to the teaching profession.

**Table 2.** Motivational Factors Associated with Second Career Teachers' Decision to Teach

<i>Motivational Factor</i>	n	%
Civic Duty and Responsibility	13	72%
Work Family Balance	11	61%
Personal Influence	11	61%
Passion to Teach	8	44%
Change Agent	6	33%

N=18

The participants within the study were very candid with their responses. The overarching theme regarding motivational factors associated with second career teachers transitioning to the teaching profession was a sense of civic duties and responsibilities. A total of 13 participants (72%) identified this motivational factor as the major reason for their transition to the teaching profession. Responses varied to include "I want an opportunity to give back to their community," "teaching provides an opportunity for me to invest in the youths of my country," and "teaching provides a new experience each day and an opportunity to share this experience with the youth of the nation." Another participant stated,

"To give back to my community...in the past, I would have taken much from my community. I feel a sense of obligation to the government, society and church. So imparting knowledge of life skills via teaching is a good form of payment in my view."

Many individuals within this society would have been recipients of scholarships, received encouragement from individuals in the community to pursue higher education and the government often emphasizes the importance of nation building via educating self and others. On this premise, many individuals feel obligated to contribute to the upward mobility of society by transitioning to the teaching profession. Further, it is culturally expected to "give back" contribute to nation building.

Most professions requires employees to work a minimum of eight hours a day, which may or may not be a shift system, and with a set amount of time for vacation which often do not exceed four weeks dependent upon the employees position within the company. On this premise, often times, this creates a struggle or an imbalance between work and family. However, within the teaching profession, teachers are required to teach only during school hours which often ranges from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., with extensive breaks (weekend off, midterm breaks off, all public holiday hours, winter (Christmas vacation a minimum of two weeks), summer vacation a minimum of eight weeks, and Spring break a minimum of two weeks which in some instances total approximately 8 to 9 months of work per year). Further, in some countries, teachers are still paid for the entire 12 months of the year. The participants of this study viewed this excess time off as an opportunity to create some stability and/or balance between work and family. Work family balance was another theme that emerged ( $n=11$ , 61%). One participant revealed that "my wife is an educator and to create some balance in my personal life, I went into the field [teaching]."

Family, previous teachers, friends, and spiritual inspiration were identified as personal influences, a major motivational factor that influence second career teachers decision to

transition to the teaching profession ( $n=11$ , 61%). One participant indicated that "my husband convinced me that going into a government job [teaching profession] would be much more beneficial to me and the family." Another participant indicated that "I came from a generation of teachers. My grandmother, mother and aunts were all teachers and they have influenced me through their excellent examples."

The passion to teach was identified as another major theme. Some participants ( $n=8$ , 44%) revealed they were passionate about teaching, enjoyed the teaching experience and was desirous of being an inspiration. One participant stated that "I would like to be an inspiration and therefore teaching is one of those professions where I get the opportunity to inspire." Another stated, "There is nothing more fulfilling than being able to mold lives." Additionally, there was a need for more males within the classroom environment as an influence.

The need to be a change agent was the final major theme that emerged. Some participants ( $n=6$ , 33%) were of the belief that teaching provides an opportunity for them to be an agent of change whether regarding the students or the educational system. One participant indicated that "being a teacher allows one to make a difference and change lives."

**Research Question 2.** What are perceived motivational factors associated with second career teachers' decision to leave the teaching profession?

Contrary to motivational factors associated with what influence second career teachers' decision to transition to the teaching profession, there were subsequent motivational factors that would influence their decision to leave the teaching profession, a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic. The major themes that emerged were (a) salary and compensation, (b) lack of support, (c) student behavior and attitude, (d) career advancement and satisfaction, and (e) lost of passion for teaching. See Table 3 outlining motivational factors associated with second career teachers' decisions to leave the teaching profession.

**Table 3.** Motivational Factors Associated with Second Career Teachers Decision to Leave Teaching

<i>Motivational Factor</i>	n	%
Salary and Compensation	16	89
Lack of Support	12	67
Student Behavior and Attitude	7	39
Career Advancement and Satisfaction	7	39
Loss of Passion for Teaching	4	22

N=18

Salary and compensation was the overarching theme regarding second career teachers' decisions to leave the teaching profession. Although all of the second career teachers would have taken a reduction in salary to enter the teaching profession ( $n=16$ , 89%), salary and compensation still emerged as a major motivational factor associated with their decision to leave the teaching profession. Participants were of the belief that if the teaching salary is not able to sustain their quality of life and not receive compensations such as health insurance and yearly salary increase, this would be a major motivational factor for them to leave the teaching profession. Further, one participant indicated that teachers are paid poorly in comparison to other noble professions. One participant indicated "financial reason...if I simply cannot support myself fully on the salary I will reconsider it [teaching profession]."

Lack of support was another major theme that emerged ( $n=12$ , 67%). Support included parental, student, administrators, the educational system, and the government. Participants were of the belief that if they did not receive support from these crucial individuals or agencies, this would be a major motivational factor for them to leave the teaching profession. Such support also included resources needed to ensure that the teaching

experience is productive and efficient. One participant indicated that "there are so many times when teachers require certain resources and tools but due to the lack of resources, teachers still have to execute their duties." Another participant indicated that the unsupportive nature of parents and school administrators in my efforts to teach my students."

Student behavior and attitude was also identified as a major motivational factor in second career teachers' decisions to leave the teaching profession. Some of the participants ( $n=7$ , 39%) were of the view that negative student behavior, lack of discipline, inability to motivate students, and school violence would influence their decision to leave the teaching profession. One participant indicated that "unruly students can be very challenging." Another participant stated that "the amount of violence in the schools. This leads me to think maybe schools are not a very safe environment. There are teachers being attacked by students as well as parents."

Career advancement and job satisfaction was identified as an equally important motivational factor ( $n=7$ , 39%). Participants were of the belief that it is imperative that there be an outlined career path within the teaching profession and opportunity for professional growth and development. Likewise, it is further crucial that the work environment is cordial and that bureaucracy between administration and staff is at a minimum.

The final theme that emerged from the participants were the lost passion for the teaching profession ( $n=4$ , 22%). Some participants indicated that there was a fear among themselves that as educators they would lose the passion or motivation to teach. One participant stated that "when it no longer feels fulfilling to teach, or no longer a joy to teach, then it is time to go." Another participant indicated that "...not effective...if I feel like I am not helping my students because of something such as teaching methods for example and I feel that I cannot improve then it is time to go."

**Research Question 3.** What are second career teachers' perceptions of how their previous careers can influence their teaching experience?

All of the participants were in agreement that their previous careers can have a positive influence on their teaching experience. Further, those entering the teaching profession engulfed with such real world experience would be more beneficial than the traditional student entering the teaching profession for the first time. The major themes that emerged were: (a) inclusion of real life experience, and (b) classroom management.

One participant stated,

Okay, for me you always want to provide your students with real life experiences. So for me I had gotten a positive experience from my previous employment... it helped me to really actually teach them[students] the information not only from the text book but how I applied this information in a real life situation when I was employed in the financial industry... I can actually bring them [students] an actual financial report and have them read it over. So I was able to take my experience from the financial industry and really transfer that into the classroom.

Another participant (banker) indicated "So coming in that classroom teaching business I can't just talk from textbook I am bringing my real life into their lives."

Subsequently, one participant expanded indicating how the incorporation of the teacher's previous career can enhance the learning experience. The participant stated:

For me I was in the media and other careers that involved a lot of technology, I teach technology it allowed me to incorporate my knowledge of technology

and my knowledge of my career field within the classroom. For example, the technology student utilizes various aspects of it in technology and various applications. So, me knowing about these applications and knowing how they apply to different modes in society allow me to assist students in creating various applications and actually help them work efficiently and effectively. So I think that with my previous career, has a lot to do and it allows me to be respected within the classroom giving students that real world experience within the classroom.

As an educator whether first or second career, classroom management is paramount and can influence the learning process (positively or negatively). It is crucial that educators are not only aware but able to execute effective strategies for managing the classroom. In this regards, one participant stated:

Coming from the hotel industry, I think it lends itself to classroom management in the sense that when you come into my classroom you follow rules, you follow regulations you follow things, in the sense that I have order in the class. I don't ask for order I demand that you follow the orders. The school has policies, life has policies, rules and regulations and I think that's the way...I think that we are falling away as a society of that because of external influences...I think we need to go back to that. I think we realize that we need to understand that there is a system that goes on that is maybe above us beyond us and understand that we all went through either the well-being of the society or the damnation of if we don't follow the rules and regulations.

As indicated by the participants in this study, the opportunity to present real life experiences into the learning environment and a better grasp on classroom management are skills second career teachers would dominate in comparison to a first career teacher.

## Discussion

The findings from this study revealed that second career teachers are intrinsically motivated to teach, and the findings were consistent with the literature regarding motivational factors that influence second career teachers' decisions to transition to the teaching profession (work family balance, personal influence, and passion to teach). However, this study identified two subsequently intrinsically motivational factors of second career teachers (civic duty and responsibility and a desire to be a change agent) to transition to the teaching profession that was not noted in related literature.

Nevertheless, their motivation to leave the teaching profession is both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. The study also provides essential information that can serve as valuable background information for policy-makers, recruitment bodies, university governance, and teacher educators. As retention of qualified teachers is paramount both locally and internationally, it is crucial that second career teachers remain motivated to teach within the educational system. On this premise, it is of utmost importance that officials within the educational system are aware of motivational factors that influence second career teachers' decisions to teach.

Subsequently, the work environment should be on that is conducive for the second career teachers who may need additional mentoring regarding the teaching profession and regarding the process of being an agent of change regarding students and program development. Subsequently, it is paramount that second career teachers, similar to first career

teachers, within their respective work environment receive support from administrators and staff. As a result of the teacher training (diploma program) not being as intense as the bachelor of education degree, may result in second career teachers being more competent in their content area but their confidence level minimal warranting more support. Professional development training can also be provided to assist second career teachers with garnering support from parents and students regarding the learning process and developing a partnership between teachers, students and parents.

Regarding second career teachers need for civic duty, it is essential that guidance be provided of exactly how these individuals can contribute to society not only as teachers but as coaches, mentors and facilitators of learning outside of the classroom environment. Providing service to community is crucial as an educator. On this premise, second career teachers can aid in the development of afterschool programs and development of additional developmental programs that would be beneficial in holistic learning of students.

As the retention of qualified teachers is essential to the success of the educational system, it is paramount that there be a define career path outlining upward mobility of second career teachers and the relevant criteria for promotional advance. Further, a proper reward system should be implemented as a motivation to second career teachers in an attempt to maintain their level of motivation to teach.

As it relates to second career teachers concerns of negative student behavior and attitude, proper programs should be implemented such as pair teaching, mentoring, and continuous workshops to assist second career teachers with effective strategies to curve negative student behavior. There should also be a structured behavior modification programs implemented within the school systems to assist with the modification of negative student behavior and attitudes.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was three-fold. First to examine motivational factors associated with second career teachers' decisions to transition to the teaching profession. Second to examine the projected motivational factors associated with second career teachers decisions to leave the teaching profession and third, obtain second career teachers perception on how their previous careers can influence their teaching experience. The study revealed that the major motivational factors associated with their decision to transition to the teaching profession were: civic responsibility, work family balance, personal influence, and passion to teach and to be a change agent. Conversely, motivational factors that influence second career teachers' decisions to leave the teaching profession include: salary and compensation, lack of support, negative student behavior and attitude, career advancement and job satisfaction and loss of passion for teaching. The second career teachers overall were of the belief that their previous career experience can influence their teaching profession in a positive manner. The findings of this study were consistent with the literature regarding second career teachers' motivational factors to teach with the addition of civic duty and responsibility and being an agent of change as additional motivational factors for second career teachers to teach.

With regards to limitations of the study, it would have been more beneficial to replicate the study throughout the entire Caribbean to ensure generalizability of the findings regarding the Caribbean.

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### **Author Note**

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