

# Retention of New Teachers in Minority French and French Immersion Programs in Manitoba

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There is a shortage of teachers in Canada qualified to teach in French; some researchers have suggested that this shortage is due to attrition. This study examined the retention in Manitoba of new teachers qualified to teach in French. Participants were 130 graduates from the only French teacher education program in the province. Attrition was minimal for these graduates. Through questionnaires and a small set of interviews, participants indicated that support from their colleagues and their experience-based pre-service training program facilitated their integration into the profession. They recommended mentorship programs and more attentive administrators to further enhance integration.

Key words: beginning teachers, teacher retention, pre-service training, mentorship, French Education

Il y a une pénurie de professeurs de français qualifiés au Canada ; certains chercheurs l'expliquent par l'attrition. Cette étude porte sur le maintien en poste des nouveaux professeurs de français qualifiés au Manitoba. Les participants étaient 130 étudiants diplômés du seul programme de formation à l'enseignement du français dans cette province. L'attrition était minimale pour ces étudiants. Dans les questionnaires et les quelques entrevues effectuées, les participants ont indiqué que l'appui de leurs collègues et leur programme de formation initiale avaient facilité leur intégration dans la profession. Ils ont recommandé que des programmes de mentorat soient instaurés et que les directions d'école soient plus attentives aux besoins des nouveaux professeurs en vue d'améliorer leur intégration.

Mots clés : enseignants débutants, maintien en poste des enseignants, stage de formation, mentorat, enseignement du français

Although English and French are the official languages in Canada, reflecting its linguistic duality, a shortage exists of teachers qualified for minority, French first-language schools (Gilbert, LeTouzé, Thériault, & Landry, 2005) and for French immersion programs (Canadian Parents for French, 2004; Veilleux et Trites, 2005). However, almost no literature explains the penury in these two particular contexts. Some U.S. researchers such as Darling-Hammond (2003) and Ingersoll and Smith (2003) suggest that teacher shortages are related to new teachers leaving the profession in the first five years of their career. Considering the importance of these two programs in contributing to the development of Canada's linguistic duality, it is important that educators begin to better understand the reality surrounding the availability of teachers.

The current study examined the challenges facing new teachers who graduated from the only French teacher education program in Manitoba: their attrition rate, the factors that facilitated their integration into the profession, and ways to better support them. In Manitoba, the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface (CUSB) has the provincial mandate to prepare all new teachers who will teach in French in the province. As a result, the majority of new teachers hired in Manitoba to teach in minority French first-language schools and in French immersion programs are graduates of the French pre-service teacher education program offered at the CUSB (M. Bilodeau, personal communication, June 3, 2009). Graduates from 2001 to 2005 were asked to complete questionnaires and some were selected to participate in follow-up interviews.

Minority French language schools are for French first-language students living in anglophone dominated Canada, whereas French immersion programs are for non-French-speaking students in French language schools. All provinces except Alberta and Nova Scotia report shortages of qualified teachers in French immersion (Canadian Parents for French, 2006). Shortages of qualified teachers in minority French first-language schools are reported particularly in rural areas and in specialized fields such as special education and guidance (Gilbert, LeTouzé, Thériault, & Landry, 2005). Although the role of the French first-language school as a socio-cultural catalyst is well known (Gérin-Lajoie, 2006; Landry et Allard, 1999; Patrimoine canadien, 2000) and the success of French immersion programs in the development of Canada's linguistic duality is

confirmed (Wesche, 2002), the shortage of teachers competent not only in French and in appropriate subject matter but also qualified to teach in either minority French first-language contexts or French immersion jeopardizes the vitality of both programs.

No studies could be found that reported reasons for a teacher shortage in minority French first-language contexts. However, according to Canadian Parents for French (2006), the principal reasons for the teacher shortage in French immersion are retirement and too few new graduates. Although training more teachers would alleviate the problem, certain U.S. researchers have suggested there are enough teachers graduating but shortages are related to new teachers leaving the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003) or teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). Unfortunately, very few statistics are available in Canada to support these claims, and even fewer studies have been published in the context of teacher attrition and minority French and French immersion programs (Karsenti, Collin, Villeneuve, Dumouchol, & Roy, 2008).

A body of research that has examined the challenges facing new teachers provides reasons why they leave the profession. Although a certain degree of challenge is important for professional growth, the ability of new teachers to face challenges may be thwarted and result in collapse when they become overwhelming. The ability to overcome challenges depends on a new teacher's resilience, or ability to adapt to difficult situations. Characteristics of resiliency include both internal factors and external factors (La Fondation canadienne des bourses d'études du millénaire, 2007). Internal factors include self-confidence, perseverance, the ability to ask for help, resourcefulness, a realistic perception of one's environment, and the ability to reflect and make connections. External factors include support from peers who strive for achievement and success, a social network, family support, and institutional support.

#### TEACHER ATTRITION

Teacher attrition is considered one of the reasons contributing to teacher shortages. In the United States, up to 50 per cent of teachers leave the profession in their first five years (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In Ontario, 20 to 30 per cent of teachers have stopped contributing to their Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan after three years of teaching (Ontario College of

Teachers, 2003). In Manitoba, recent statistics from the Manitoba Teachers Retirement Allowance Fund (B. Venuto, personal communication, May 1, 2008) show that 26 per cent of teachers have stopped contributing to the Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund after the first five years of teaching. Furthermore, almost 27 per cent of Manitoba's teachers are 51 years old or older (Manitoba Teachers' Society, 2007). This high forthcoming teacher retirement could also contribute to a teacher shortage. Although the student population in Manitoba is decreasing, enrolments in French immersion are increasing and enrolments in French first-language programs are maintaining enrolment (Manitoba Éducation, Citoyenneté et Jeunesse, 2007). Educators must take measures to retain the new teachers in the profession.

Although a certain amount of turnover can be healthy to prevent stagnation, it is less healthy when the turnover is taking place with the young recruits. New teachers, who can offer fresh ideas and energy, contribute to the renewal and maintenance of existing programs. However, turnover saps already meagre resources. School divisions must devote attention, time, and resources to attract new teachers. Once hired, they expend resources to integrate new teachers into the school culture. Furthermore, turnover of new teachers can jeopardize school reform which requires long-term shared commitment (Voke, 2003)

New teachers leave the profession for a variety of reasons. One reason often cited for teachers leaving the profession is inadequate pre-service training. Russell, McPherson, and Martin (2001) discuss the state of pre-service training programs in Canadian universities, suggesting that traditional transmission model programs, which do not necessarily adequately prepare students for the real world of teaching, perpetuate gaps between teacher preparation and the responsibility of full-time teaching. On a scale of 1 to 4 from satisfactory to unsatisfactory, only 34.7 per cent of beginning teachers (n = 905) who responded to a survey conducted by the Ontario College of Teachers (2003) described their preparedness for teaching following their teacher education program as satisfactory.

Darling-Hammond (2003) lists ways to improve the rate of teacher turnover: proper pre-service training, support for novice teachers, and improvement of working conditions. Darling-Hammond (2006) describes

three cornerstones that she believes are essential to achieve radically different outcomes for teacher preparation programs. She talks about coherence and integration in schools between coursework and clinical work to create a seamless experience of learning to teach. She underlines the importance of an extensive, well supervised clinical experience related to course work using pedagogies that link theory and practice. And finally, she emphasizes the need to place new teachers strategically in settings where curriculum reforms and improvement initiatives are supported, where cooperating teachers are trained to become teacher educators, and where state-of-the-art practice is the goal.

A second reason new teachers leave is related to working conditions. With respect to poor working conditions, researchers have pointed to lack of resources and high student/teacher ratios (Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005), behaviour problems (Wutke, 2005; Kelly, 2004), and to a lesser extent, inadequate benefits and salaries (Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Luekens, Lyter, & Fox, 2004; Wutke, 2005). In her role as new teacher support provider in California, Patterson (2005) describes the often difficult situation facing novice teachers as hazing, defining the term as "institutional practices and policies that result in new teachers experiencing poorer working conditions than their veteran colleagues" (p. 21). Although these new teachers had the passion to succeed, they were put in situations with the most difficult courses, difficult students, and untenable schedules.

Induction programs combined with a mentoring component hold promise to help new teachers integrate into the profession (Carter & Francis, 2001; McCann, Johnson, & Ricca, 2005; Serpell & Bozeman, 1999; Smith & Ingersoll, 2005; Wong, 2004). Wong (2002) talks about the importance of induction programs with on-going professional development that is structured and intensive and designed specifically for the needs of new teachers, combined with strong administrative support and mentoring. The role of administrators is crucial to ensure support for new teachers (Wutke, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson & Kardos, 2005). Gorrow's (2005) survey of undergraduate students enrolled in her classroom management course found that students wanted their future administrators to support them in four ways: by supporting teachers' decisions; by being physically visible in the school; by serving as instructional re-

sources; by providing feedback to teachers about classroom management.

#### TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM AT COLLÈGE UNIVERSITAIRE DE SAINT BONIFACE

This study was carried out with a population of new teachers who were trained specifically to teach in French immersion or minority French language schools in Manitoba. The new teachers who participated were all graduates of an experience-based, pre-service teacher education program offered at Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface (CUSB). The CUSB has developed a pre-service teacher education program to reflect the principles outlined by Darling-Hammond (2006). The experience-based program is anchored in socio-constructivist principles, that is, students participate actively in constructing their knowledge in the social context both of the classroom and of the faculty. With full-time professors teaching undergraduate education courses and acting as faculty advisors, faculty members believe that the possibility to create links between theory and practice is facilitated. The ultimate goal of the program is to socialize teacher candidates gradually into the teaching profession, to develop their pedagogical competencies, and to cultivate life-long learners.

The Bachelor of Education degree offered at CUSB is a two year after-degree program. Admission to the program depends on an applicant's competence in French as determined by both a written and oral French test developed by the CUSB, as well as their GPA and professional suitability dossier. Competence in French is considered a crucial component in educating qualified teachers for both French immersion and French first-language contexts. Approximately 45 pre-service teachers graduate each year from the program.

In the first year of their program, teacher candidates attend classes at the faculty from September until the end of April with one two-week block of practicum in October and a second two-week block of practicum in February. In the second year, students are placed in classrooms from the beginning of September until the end of March. They attend classes at the faculty every Monday until mid-February at which point their classes at the faculty finish and they remain in their school placements full time. All communication at the faculty is in French. Teacher candi-

dates are placed either in French immersion classrooms or in French first-language programs to complete their practicum and the course work required by their professors at the faculty. All assignments related to the second year are fully integrated into the teacher candidates' practicum. Preliminary studies have shown that the experience-based program is successful in preparing new teachers for the reality of the teaching profession. For example, Ewart (2001) conducted interviews with five graduates of the program offered at CUSB. She found that the integration into the profession for these new teachers was very smooth because they were socialized into the teaching profession by living the life of a teacher for an extended period of time and by collaborating with a community of learners to discuss learning theory and ensuing pedagogical practices. In a subsequent study, Ewart (2005) held group discussions with the collaborating teachers who participated as mentors in the experience-based program at CUSB. These teachers stated that the long-term field experience effectively socialized teacher candidate into the teaching profession, both in the classroom and the school.

The educational community this faculty serves is relatively small, insular, and well known to faculty advisors, who, in consultation with school administrators, use certain criteria to choose collaborating teachers, the classroom teachers who work closely with the teacher candidates for the seven-month practicum. Faculty have established criteria for the practicum that reflect the conceptual framework and underlying assumptions of the program. These criteria include the preferences of teacher candidates, an acceptance on the part of collaborating teacher of a constructivist view of learning, a commitment of both partners to build a collaborative work environment, a commitment to inquiry as a component of learning, and the possibility of placing at least two students in a school. A further criterion for immersion schools is preference to those schools that are best able to provide a linguistically rich French environment. The selection of collaborating teachers is a critical aspect of the program because teacher candidates spend approximately seven months in their extended practicum setting in their final year. It is also critical to place teacher candidates in classrooms that reflect the conceptual framework of the faculty to create cohesion and integration between their coursework and their practicum.

## PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

One of the purposes of this study was to determine whether teacher attrition in Manitoba contributes to the teacher shortage in minority French first-language and French immersion programs. Second, this study looked at the challenges facing new teachers and the factors that facilitate their integration into the profession. Third, this study asked new teachers to suggest ways they might be better supported in their transition into the profession. And finally, this study sought to consider whether the program that CUSB has contributed to the integration of new teachers into the profession.

## METHODS

### *Participants*

The population for this study included the 207 students of the Faculté d'éducation at the CUSB in Manitoba who graduated from 2001 to 2005. The participants had from one to five years teaching experience. Of the 207 graduates who were asked to participate, 130 teachers returned the questionnaire (return rate of 63%). Of this sample, nine participants (7%) had left the profession, three (2%) never taught, and the remaining 118 (91%) were currently teaching. The rate of participation for each of the five graduation years varied from 51 per cent to 69 per cent. Before the participants were admitted to the Faculté d'éducation, a little more than half (54%) of them graduated from French first-language high schools in Manitoba and one third (31%) were graduates of French immersion high schools in Manitoba. The rest (15%) of the participants were either graduates of another program or were educated in another province or country before being admitted. Ninety-two per cent of the participants in this study had attended the experience-based, teacher education program at CUSB (the other 8 per cent attended the faculty-based program that was in place in 2001).

### *Data Collection Method*

An explanatory mixed method design was used (Cresswell, 2008) to allow initially for the collection of quantitative data followed by qualitative data. The first phase of the research involved a questionnaire. The



second phase of the data collection involved follow-up interviews with five participants, designed to elaborate on the findings of the questionnaires.

*Questionnaires.* Based on the questionnaire administered by the Ontario College of Teachers (May, 2003) as part of its "Transition into Teaching Study," one questionnaire was prepared for teachers who had left the profession and the second questionnaire, for those teachers who continued (See Appendix). The key purposes for the questionnaires were to identify the following information: factors that facilitated the integration of new teachers into the profession, challenges they faced, recommendations on how to better support new teachers, and recommendations with respect to pre-service education.

Four of the questions, which included a list of possible responses to choose from, provided a space for written comments. These questions asked participants to identify factors that posed challenges, factors that facilitated their transition into the profession, and factors that would have helped them as new teachers. They were also asked to share their career plans.

Four open-ended questions asked participants to identify their present challenges or, as the case might be, reasons for leaving the profession, to comment on their pre-service training, to make suggestions to support new teachers, and to comment on whether they would recommend the teaching profession to others. The list of graduates and their addresses was available through the CUSB, and the questionnaires were mailed via Canada Post after ethics approval was obtained. Two reminders were sent out.

*Interviews.* The purpose of the interviews was to further investigate key findings from the questionnaires. Therefore, the researcher conducted the interviews with participants who were chosen according to the quality of their written responses on their questionnaires with respect to mentorship programs, the role of colleagues, and the role of school administrators. Because all these participants had experienced the same pre-service training, this factor was not a selection criterion.

Letters were sent to eleven potential participants, three males and eight females, three were graduates of a French immersion program and eight were graduates of a French first-language program, and, at the

time of the study, eight taught in French immersion schools and three taught in minority French first-language schools. Five of the eleven teachers agreed to be interviewed. Jean (all interviewees have been given pseudonyms) was 37 and taught social sciences to twelve to fourteen year old students in a French first-language school. His teaching assignment did not match his area of expertise which was high school chemistry and mathematics. Raymonde was 29 and taught in a grade 4/5 combined classroom (nine and ten year old students) in a French immersion school. Sarah-Anne, 29, taught part-time in a grade 3/4 combined classroom (eight and nine year old students) in a French immersion school. Vanessa, 28, taught grade 3 (eight year old students) in a French immersion school. Lizanne, 32, and taught high school mathematics in a dual-track French immersion high school. All the interviewees graduated in 2005 except Lizanne who graduated in 2001.

Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes. Three questions guided the semi-structured, one-on-one interviews: one question asked interviewees to describe the support they received from colleagues, another question addressed the role of administrators in helping new teachers, and the last question asked them to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of their pre-service program. Ewart (the author of this article) conducted the interviews and although she was one of the instructors at CUSB, the interviewees' comments about their pre-service training did not deviate from the responses on the questionnaires.

#### *Data Analysis*

*Questionnaires.* In analysing the data from the questionnaires, the frequency with which certain answers were chosen was calculated in percentages with the assistance of SPSS (2004). The written responses as well as the open-ended questions were analyzed and categorized according to emerging themes with the help of NUD\*IST (2002). The written responses were compared to the descriptive statistics obtained from the frequency tables of selected responses. The comparison involved looking for similarities and differences between the written responses and the descriptive statistics. In some cases the written responses reflected the descriptive statistics and in other cases, the written responses revealed data that were unavailable in the list of supplied possible responses.

*Interviews.* The interviews, which were audio-taped and transcribed using Dragon Naturally Speaking (2007), were subsequently analyzed using NUD\*IST (2002). The analysis began with detailed coding of one transcript. The categories developed from the first transcript were then applied to subsequent transcripts. Additional coding categories were added as needed to reflect the data of the remaining transcripts. The analysis of the interview transcripts was recursive. In other words, any new category that the researcher added was then applied to all previous transcripts. All data were collected in French.

## FINDINGS

The key findings of the study are noted below. First, the attrition rate of these participants was very low. Second, as shown in Table 1, although the most common challenges identified were classroom management and evaluation, almost half the participants did not identify these factors as challenges to their integration into the profession. In other words, the participants did not overwhelmingly choose any one particular challenge. Third, as shown in Table 2, the most common factors that facilitated their transition into the profession were their pre-service training and support from their colleagues, factors chosen overwhelmingly by the majority of the participants. And fourth, as shown in Table 3, these participants recommended a mentorship program as well as more attentive administrators to further facilitate new teachers' transition into the profession.

### *Low Attrition Rates*

Retention rates of participants of this study, graduates from the Faculté d'éducationat CUSB , reveal that 91 per cent (118 participants) were teaching, 2 per cent (3 participants) never taught, and 7 per cent (9 participants) left the profession. Of those three (2%) who never taught, one participant was not offered a position, another returned to her previous employment because her leave expired, and another realized after her practicum experience that teaching was not for her. For those nine (7%) who left the profession, their reasons for quitting varied from staying home with young children (3 participants), obligation to return to previous profession (1 participant), unsuccessful application for study leave

(1 participant), difficulties with the school administration (2 participants), inability to find a teaching position (1 participant), or stress related sickness (1 participant). The researcher has chosen not to report the responses of the nine participants who left teaching because six of them planned to return to teaching, including the three participants on maternity leave. As a result, only three of the nine intended to leave the profession permanently. This negligible number shows that attrition is not substantial for this group of graduates.

The data from this study show that the attrition rate of new teachers in Manitoba graduating from an experience-based, teacher education program sits at seven per cent. To verify that this attrition rate was representative of the entire population, that is the 130 new teachers who chose to participate and the 77 new teachers who chose not to participate, the researcher used the data base of Manitoba Education Citoyenneté et Jeunesse (M. Bilodeau, personal communication, May 20, 2008) for the CUSB graduates, which reported that eight (10%) of the 77 teachers never taught in Manitoba and eight (10%) had left the profession by the end of 2007, the year the study was conducted. These data increase the attrition rate of the total population of graduates from 2001-2005 (207 graduates) from the experience-based, teacher program from seven per cent to eight per cent. With such a low attrition rate, it is interesting to turn attention to the challenges that faced these new teachers and the factors that facilitated their transition into the profession.

#### *Participants Seemed Well-Prepared to Face Challenges*

When asked about the challenges they faced at the outset of their careers, the responses were fairly evenly distributed across the thirteen choices (see Table 1). Although the three most prevalent challenges were classroom management, evaluation, and lack of resources, almost half the respondents did not identify them. Classroom management garnered the most responses with 61 per cent of the participants selecting it and, according to written comments, particularly as it related to students with special needs. Evaluation was indicated as a challenge by 53 per cent of the participants. Written comments suggest that the challenges with evaluation were related to report cards. Lack of resources was chosen by 48 per cent of the participants, and written comments pointed to a lack of

materials in French. From the 40 written comments, certain challenges emerged that were not included in the choices offered on the questionnaire. Nine (22%) of the participants expressed frustration with the lack of time necessary to fulfill their professional obligations. Seven (17%) participants felt they did not receive proper support from their school administrators.

Table 1  
Factors That Challenged Integration into the Profession

Challenging factors	Percentage of teachers who identified factor (n=118)
Classroom management	61%
Student evaluation	52.5%
Lack of resources	48.3%
Lesson planning	44.1%
Language competency of my students	35.6%
Parent-teacher relations	28.8%
My teaching assignment not corresponding to the level at which I was trained	25.4%
Teaching strategies and techniques	20.3%
My teaching assignment not corresponding to the subjects for which I was trained	19.5%
Obligation to participate in extra-curricular activities	18.6%
Differentiated instruction	17.8%
My language competency	9.3%
Relations with my colleagues	7.6%
Other	28.8%

The question regarding present challenges was an open-ended question to which 105 participants (89%) responded. These responses tend to mirror the responses provided regarding challenges at the outset of their careers. Again, classroom management was the most prevalent challenge. Forty-three per cent (43%) of the respondents wrote about the challenges presented in managing children with behaviour problems as well as those with learning difficulties. Twenty-one per cent (21%) of the

participants wrote about the lack of time to fulfill their professional responsibilities. They suggested they were so busy with extracurricular activities, committees, or paperwork that they found it very difficult to balance their personal and professional lives. Differentiating instruction and evaluation to meet the various needs of the learners was identified by 13 per cent of the participants as challenges they were encountering at the time of participating in the study.

*The Importance of Networking and Pre-Service Training to Professional Integration*

This question, which asked new teachers about the factors that facilitated their transition into the profession, had eight possible responses as well as room for written comments (see Table 2). The most common response chosen by 82 per cent of the participants was "support from my colleagues." No other answer to any question on the questionnaire garnered such a high frequency of responses. Forty-one (35%) participants included written comments and the role of colleagues was reiterated in eight of them. They mentioned the importance of being able to ask other teachers questions and to share resources.

The second most widely chosen factor in facilitating integration into the profession was the participants' pre-service training. This response was chosen by 79 per cent of the participants. Furthermore, 73 per cent of the participants said their collaborating teacher, a key player in their pre-service training, facilitated their transition. The written comments spoke specifically to the fact that their pre-service training offered them an extensive practicum experience in the final year of their degree.

One hundred twelve of the 118 (95%) respondents answered the open-ended question that asked for comments on their pre-service training. Only one participant expressed dissatisfaction with his pre-service training and 97 of the 112 (87%) respondents wrote favourable comments. There was general consensus that the extended practicum was the strength of the program. Some participants specifically mentioned the value of the practicum and others talked about their pre-service training exposing them to the "reality" of teaching. Their comments were

Table 2  
Factors That Facilitated Integration into the Profession

Facilitating factor	Percentage of teachers who identified factor (n=118)
Support from my colleagues	82.1%
My pre-service training	78.6%
Interaction with students	75.2%
Support from my collaborating teacher	72.6%
Teaching assignment which corresponded to the level at which I did my training	63.2%
Support from the administration	53%
Teaching assignment which corresponded to the subjects for which I was trained	47%
Mentorship program	24.8%
Other	23.9%

overwhelmingly supportive with the word “excellent” used to describe the program in 26 per cent of the written comments and words such as “good program” or “good preparation” used in the other 74 per cent.

The interviews also reflected the graduates’ high level of satisfaction with their pre-service training. At the outset of her interview, when asked what facilitated her integration into the profession, Raymonde stated:

*One of the reasons that I believe I am one of the best trained teachers in Canada is the program at the Collège which gives you support for a whole year not only with respect to what teaching is, but how to develop relations with parents, what is involved in report cards, written assignments. (Raymonde)*

Lizanne, who compared her pre-service training with that of her friends from other programs, said, “I started my career with more resources particularly because of my student teaching experience.” Sarah-Anne said that

her practicum during her teacher training and the fact that she accepted a part-time position in the school where she trained were the key elements in ensuring her smooth transition into the profession. Vanessa said her transition into the profession was very easy because of the experience-based program offered by the Collège. She said her pre-service training prepared her to participate on committees, go to meetings, and live the life of a teacher. She said it was a “real” experience. Participants were very satisfied with their pre-service training.

*Mentorship Programs and More Attentive Administrators Are Necessary Supports for New Teachers*

The question, “What could have further helped your integration into the profession” offered six possible responses, with space for written comments (See Table 3). Participants most often identified mentorship programs and more attentive administrators as necessary supports for new teachers. Fifty-three (45%) of the respondents chose to write comments. One suggestion to emerge from the written comments revolved around the workload in the first year of teaching.

*Mentorship Programs Are Necessary Supports for New Teachers.* The factor that received the most support was a mentorship program with forty-four per cent of the participants choosing it as a suggestion for support at the onset of their careers. The written responses pointed to the importance of having more opportunities for the kind of support offered by a mentor. Almost half the teachers who remained in the profession wrote comments about their need to network with other teachers, particularly those with experience who taught at the same level or taught the same courses. Some participants mentioned that they would have liked more opportunities for sharing resources, teaching strategies, lesson plans, or classroom experiences. Some wanted ideas for dealing with classroom management. Others spoke of the need to have someone to answer questions, solve problems, or confide in. Some participants wanted a chance to observe in other classrooms.



Table 3  
Factors That Would Have Facilitated New Teachers Integrate Into the Profession

Factors which would have facilitated integration into the profession	Percentage of teachers who identified factor (n=118)
Mentorship program	44.1%
A more attentive administration	30.5%
Having a teaching assignment that corresponds to the level of my training	23.7%
Having a teaching assignment that corresponds to the subjects I was trained to teach	16%
Fair salary	15.3%
More cooperative colleagues	15.3%
Other	29.7%

All interviewees had experienced some kind of transition program for new teachers. Jean's experience was limited to three of four workshops offered by the provincial teachers' association. He appreciated the suggestions given to him on classroom management and the possibility to discuss with other teachers their experiences as new teachers. Vanessa and Lizanne benefited from both the provincial workshops and four half days that their school division offered on topics such as classroom management, organization, and student evaluation. Vanessa also had a mentor assigned to her at the school. Although she appreciated her mentor's help, she said there was often little time to meet. And Lizanne, who began her career in the same school division as Vanessa, found that the divisional in-services for new teachers were not beneficial to her because they were not grade, discipline, or program (English versus French immersion) specific. However, she appreciated the practicality of the workshops offered by the provincial teachers' association. When Lizanne ap-

proached the administration of her school about the possibility of an in-school mentor, the administration told her to find one on her own.

Sarah-Anne started her career with a part-time position and besides her training, she stated that the fact she did not take a full time position rendered her transition into the profession relatively seamless. Once Sarah-Anne got a full time contract, she found herself enrolled in her division's transition program with her colleague Raymonde. Their program provided them with four sources of support: a divisional mentor whose responsibility was to work specifically with French immersion teachers; an in-school colleague or "buddy"; professional dialogue sessions; and professional development opportunities. They spoke very enthusiastically of the transition program offered to them. Both Raymonde and Sarah-Anne commented on the importance of having an in-school mentor or "buddy":

*At the school level, they try to find you a buddy. I was paired with a teacher who taught grades three and four and I taught grade four. It was excellent, partly because the school organised it but also because she was an incredible person who gave me lots of advice and other things. So if you do not have a buddy, you have to find a person, because there are so many things that only someone from the school can know. The administration can't answer all your questions. (Raymonde)*

For Sarah-Anne, the importance of having a colleague was invaluable. She commented,

*New teachers should not feel shy to ask questions. If you are shy and don't ask for help, at some point in time it will be too much [...] You have to share resources. The bell rings, there is a crisis in your class, I can ask for help. 'Do you have pencils? Where are the flashlights?' There was a pancake breakfast, and I didn't know what to expect. I was told to arrive early to make sure I got my parking spot. If you are new you have no idea what to expect. (Sarah-Anne)*

Although Jean had a difficult transition, he was quick to point out that his colleagues were always ready to help. And Lizanne, who did not benefit from the support of her colleagues either formally through mentorship program or informally through school initiatives, stated that lack of support from her colleagues was her biggest challenge. All partici-

pants appreciated some aspects of programming that had been put in place to support their transition. The role of in-school mentors appeared to be pivotal to their smooth integration.

*More Attentive Administrators Are Necessary to Support New Teachers.* The second most common factor identified by teachers to facilitate transition into the profession was a more attentive administrator. Thirty-one per cent of the teachers chose this factor. The written comments suggest that participants wanted administrators to reduce workloads, increase planning time and limit extra duties, provide classroom placements that optimized chances for success, and facilitate participation in professional development activities. Several participants mentioned that administrators should receive special training to facilitate the transition of new teachers.

One suggestion that emerged from the written comments revolved around the workload in the first year of teaching. Ten participants wrote about the possibility of a workload that would be less than 100 per cent. Others (eight) suggested more time for planning and less extra-curricular obligations. Reducing the number of students in a new teacher's classroom, limiting the number of new courses to teach, and limiting the number of students with special needs were other suggestions. And another eight participants suggested they would have benefited from more information on a series of topics including classroom management, counselling, and dealing with students with special needs.

The interviews explained in more detail the role of an exemplary administrator. The interviewees talked about administrators providing resources such as mentors, having realistic expectations, visiting classrooms and providing feedback, and supporting teachers' decisions.

Sarah-Anne felt an administrator should provide new teachers with mentors who have been carefully chosen to support new teachers. Lizanne, who worked in a dual-track school that offered both an English program and a French immersion program, said administrators must be able to communicate in French, provide the necessary curriculum documents, and have not only a good understanding of the immersion program, but also support for it.

Vanessa and Jean talked about the importance of administrators having realistic expectations and acknowledging teachers' efforts. Vanessa

said that administrators should be sensitive to the feelings of new teachers who may be nervous or overwhelmed. They must understand the importance for new teachers to find a balance between their professional life and their personal life and hence be more flexible with respect to expectations for committee work and extracurricular activities. Jean talked about the challenges he faced with classroom management. He said that administrators must understand that new teachers need to be “cut a little slack.” Vanessa summed up her discussion of attributes of good administrators, saying they must remember to acknowledge the work of teachers, an act that she believed was crucial to ensure a positive school culture. Having experienced a variety of teaching positions at the outset of her career, Vanessa felt extremely validated when one of her principals presented her with flowers after she organized a talent night at the school.

Raymonde and Sarah-Anne discussed the importance of administrators visiting classrooms and providing feedback. Sarah-Anne noted how her principal offered support and built a relationship. She said,

*In the first month, he [the principal] came once a week not to observe me but to assure me he was there if I needed anything. It was important to me because I didn't want to feel alone. When the doors are closed, you are alone and there is no one else around. Then there is an emergency. Knowing that the principal is present in the halls reassured me.*  
(Sarah-Anne)

These impromptu visits were important to Sarah-Anne because they helped minimize her feelings of isolation. Raymonde appreciated the regular classroom visits and the feedback her principal provided to improve her teaching. She spoke of her relationship with her principal thus:

*I was very comfortable with my teaching but also with the principal. She made me feel at ease. 'I am here to help you, I want you to succeed, yes, I will evaluate you, I want you to get a [permanent] position. I will come but I will look for many different things, both the good things and those that you can improve.' She really calmed me. However, I was used to regular visits from my faculty advisor so it was less stressful when my principal came.*  
(Raymonde)

They appreciated their principals' being present in their classrooms often, to offer advice, encouragement, or assistance.

Finally, two of the interviewees, Vanessa and Raymonde, talked about the importance of administrators supporting teachers' decisions. Vanessa said administrators must be ready to support teachers in difficult situations with parents. She said administrators should not overturn a teacher's decision about a student out of fear of parents. Otherwise, "*You feel like your power has been usurped. It is very important to feel you are supported [by the administrator].*" Raymonde also spoke not only of an administrator's role with difficult parents, but also of the importance of an administrator being physically present in the school. Although Raymonde had the benefit of an in-school mentor, she said it was important that the principal be available for certain consultations.

*One of our problems was that our school is small and the principal was often gone. Sometimes I said to myself, 'I am going to have a problem with this parent or, there is a conflict between these two students.' It is important that you have someone who you can consult who is your superior. You can see your in-school mentor, but you want to be sure your principal will support your decisions.* (Raymonde)

The interviewees had very clear expectations for their principals. They saw them as playing crucial roles in providing resources, having realistic expectations, providing feedback, and supporting teachers' decisions.

#### *Participants Plan to Remain in Teaching*

Only one of the teachers declared that he or she would like to change professions and five participants foresaw a change in their profession at some future point in time. The other 96 per cent planned to stay in teaching; however, their decision was not without certain changes to their present status, which included transfers to other schools, transfers to other grade levels, or pursuing their studies to take on new roles within the education field. For example, 35 per cent of the participants said they would like to change schools, 38 per cent said they would like to change levels, and 10 per cent said they would like to switch programs (for example, moving from a French immersion program to a French first language program). Fifty-five per cent of the participants expressed an in-

terest in pursuing their university education. The areas of further studies to garnered the most interest were special needs, administration, and counselling.

#### *Teaching Is a Vocation*

Five (4%) of the 118 participants who stayed in the teaching profession would not recommend the profession to others. These participants lamented the work load, the stress, and the inability to balance their professional life with their personal life. Of the five who would not recommend teaching, three responded that they planned to quit.

The majority of those who recommended teaching to others did so with caveats. Thirteen (11%) said they would recommend teaching but that interested candidates should be aware that it is a very demanding profession. Others (16%) said they would recommend teaching only to those who were passionate about working with children. The word *passion* recurred frequently in the comments. They talked about teaching being a vocation: that candidates should be sure they wanted to teach, that teaching was a calling, and that the challenges inherent in teaching were worthwhile only if prospective candidates had a passion for teaching. Almost half the participants talked about certain characteristics essential to success as a teacher. These included being responsible, creative, dynamic, motivated, collaborative, energetic, engaged, confident, and liking challenges. Patience, flexibility, and a love of children were the characteristics the recurred most frequently. Generally, the participants who recommended the profession without bracketing their recommendation with a certain caveat spoke of the rewards of teaching in terms of the satisfaction they received from interacting with their students and watching them succeed.

#### DISCUSSION

The attrition rate for teachers in Manitoba is 26 per cent (TRAF, 2007) after the first five years of teaching. The attrition rate for the participants for this study, the graduates of CUSB's teacher education program, is seven per cent. Because CUSB is responsible for training all teachers of French in Manitoba, and the attrition rate of these graduates is relatively low, attrition does not appear a factor contributing to a shortage in Mani-

toba of qualified teachers in French immersion and minority French language programs. To understand the low attrition rate of the participants in this study, it is interesting to look at the challenges and the facilitating factors present at the outset of their career, particularly in terms of their resilience to difficult situations.

The challenges facing the participants at the outset of their careers were classroom management, lack of resources, and evaluation. These findings are not new to the literature (Brock & Grady, 1997; Veenman, 1984). A recent Manitoba Teachers' Society (2008) opinion poll showed that student behaviour has surpassed class size as Manitoba teachers' number one concern. It seems, then, that student behaviour poses a challenge not only to new teachers, but also to experienced teachers. However, although classroom management, lack of resources, and evaluation were the factors most often identified posing as challenges to the CUSB graduates, 39 per cent of the participants did not identify classroom management and nearly half the participants did not identify either evaluation or lack of resources as challenges. It appears that although these new teachers identified certain challenges, none were shared overwhelmingly by the majority of the participants.

One explanation for the low attrition rates may be related to the support that these participants received at the outset of their career. Eighty-two per cent (82%) of the participants chose "support from my colleagues" as a factor that facilitated their transition into the profession. These graduates found jobs in schools where staff were ready to support new teachers and where the new teachers felt confident enough to ask for support. The kinds of support offered by their colleagues is an external factor often mentioned in research on resiliency (Bondy & McKenzie, 1999; Wilson & Ferch, 2005). Furthermore, it is not surprising that these participants called for the importance of networking and supportive administrators as recommendations for further facilitating new teachers' integration into the profession.

Another factor that could contribute to the low attrition rates has to do with the fact that the graduates of CUSB's experience-based program began their teaching careers in schools that offered programs similar to their own school experiences, either French immersion or French first-language schools. In many cases, these new teachers returned to the

same school division they attended as students. As a result, they were often familiar with the context. This finding corroborates Yeager, Marshall, and Madsen's (2003) conclusion that the attrition rate for novice teachers who grew up in rural areas in mid-western United States and who were teaching in rural areas was half the national average; they attributed this higher retention rate to the fact that the teachers in their study were teaching in similar situations to those they had experienced as students.

The pre-service training these participants received was also seen as a facilitating factor. This high level of satisfaction with their pre-service training is in contrast with other studies that point to inadequate pre-service training as a possible reason why new teachers leave the profession. For example, the Ontario College of Teachers (2003) reported that only 34 per cent of the first-year teachers thought their faculty of education preparation for teaching was satisfactory and another 40 per cent rated it somewhat satisfactory. Although inadequate pre-service training has been cited as a reason why new teachers leave the profession, the graduates of CUSB's experience-based program claimed their pre-service training facilitated their integration into the profession. Perhaps the cornerstones suggested by Darling-Hammond (2006) as essential to proper pre-service training are reflected in the experience-based program offered at CUSB:

...tight coherence and integration among courses and between course work and clinical work in schools, extensive and intensely supervised clinical work integrated with course work pedagogies that link theory and practice, and closer, proactive relationships with schools that serve diverse learners effectively and develop and model good teaching. (p. 300)

It would therefore seem plausible that the pre-service training of the CUSB teachers contributed to their resiliency and to a smooth transition into the profession and subsequently, a low attrition rate.

A final interesting point with respect to attrition is that 96 per cent of the teachers in the sample reported that they liked teaching and the same number reported that they planned to remain in the profession. It seems unlikely, then, that attrition rates would rise after CUSB teachers have completed five years of teaching.



Limitations to this study include the fact that 92 per cent of the participants were graduates of one particular teacher education program and therefore, the results are not necessarily generalizable to other populations. Also, the return rate on the questionnaires was 63 per cent of the total number of graduates from 2001-2005. As a result, the study does not report on the 27 per cent or 77 graduates who did not participate. In some cases, the requests to participate were undeliverable and in other cases the participants chose not to participate.

#### SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine whether new teacher attrition is a reality in minority French and French immersion programs in Manitoba and, if so, what factors pose challenges to new teachers. If attrition is not a factor, what factors facilitate the transition of new teachers into the profession? Finally, this study tried to determine whether an experience-based, teacher preparation program is an enabling factor for new teachers adapting to the profession.

New teacher attrition does not appear to be a reality for the graduates of an experience-based, pre-service teacher education program. The factors that facilitate their integration into the profession include support from their colleagues to share resources and answer questions, and their pre-service training that included an extensive practicum experience in the final year of their degree. The participants recommended a mentorship program to facilitate new teachers' integration into the profession that would permit networking with experienced teachers and professional development opportunities; they also recommended administrators who could provide resources, have realistic expectations, give feedback, and support teachers' decisions.

#### *Implications*

Several implications can be drawn from this study. First, school districts should investigate transition programs in the context of French immersion and minority French first language classrooms to facilitate new teacher integration into the profession. Second, new teachers identified evaluation and classroom management as challenges. As a result, administrators and pre-service teacher educators should be in constant renewal

to ensure they are serving the present generation of learners and the changing role of schools in society particularly as it pertains to the inclusion of all learners. Third, due to the high level of satisfaction of these participants with respect to their pre-service training, faculties of education may want to look at the experience-based model offered at the CUSB.

In terms of implications for further research, teacher attrition does not seem to be an issue in Manitoba for French immersion and minority French first-language classrooms. It could be that the shortage of teachers competent to teach in these two programs may be linked to too few graduates. If this is the case, research should be conducted to uncover strategies to recruit qualified teachers to French immersion and minority French contexts to alleviate the teacher shortage in these two programs. More specifically, as suggested by Department of Canadian Heritage (2004), scholarships should be offered to attract promising students to B.Ed. programs particularly those that require an initial degree for admission. Second, bursaries should be offered to give prospective students an opportunity to improve their competency in the French language so they are able to meet language admission criteria.

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**Appendix**  
**Questionnaire pour les enseignants qui choisissent de *rester* dans la profession**

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# de participant : \_\_\_\_\_

1. De quelle école as-tu reçu ton diplôme d'études secondaire?
  - a) École française au Manitoba  
(laquelle?) \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) École d'immersion au Manitoba  
(laquelle?) \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) École française d'une autre province  
(quelle province?) \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) École d'immersion d'une autre province  
(quelle province?) \_\_\_\_\_
  - e) Autre (spécifie) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. De quelle université as-tu reçu ton premier baccalauréat? (*coche*)
  - a) Collège universitaire de Saint Boniface \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Université du Manitoba \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) Université de Winnipeg \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) Autre (spécifie) \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Quelle est la nature de ton premier baccalauréat. (i.e., Baccalauréat es lettres, Baccalauréat es sciences, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Quelles étaient tes concentrations, majeure et mineure, dans ton premier baccalauréat?
  - a) Majeure \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Mineure \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Quels sont les autres degrés, diplômes post-secondaires, (i.e., certificat d'ouvrier spécialisé, diplôme d'études collégiales, etc.) que tu as reçus, à l'exception de ton premier baccalauréat?

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6. Quelle formation à l'enseignement as-tu choisi? (*coche*)
- a)     Enseignement élémentaire     \_\_\_\_\_
- b)     Enseignement secondaire     \_\_\_\_\_
7. Combien d'années d'enseignement as-tu complétées? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Dans quel(s) programme(s) as-tu enseigné?  
(*coche la(ou les) réponse(s) appropriée(s)*)
- a)     \_\_\_\_\_ Programme d'immersion
- b)     \_\_\_\_\_ Programme français
- c)     \_\_\_\_\_ Programme anglais
- d)     Autre :  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Quelle était ta charge de travail au début de ta carrière?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
10. Quelle est ta charge de travail maintenant?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
11. Qu'est-ce qui a facilité ton intégration à la profession?  
(*coche la (ou les) réponse(s) appropriée(s)*)
- a)     \_\_\_\_\_ Ma formation m'a bien préparé
- b)     \_\_\_\_\_ L'appui de l'administration
- c)     \_\_\_\_\_ L'appui de mes collègues
- d)     \_\_\_\_\_ L'appui de mon professeur coopérant dans mes  
          stages



- e) \_\_\_\_\_ L'occasion d'enseigner le(s) niveau(x) qui correspondait(aient) à ma formation
  - f) \_\_\_\_\_ L'occasion d'enseigner la(les) discipline(s) qui correspondait(aient) à ma formation
  - g) \_\_\_\_\_ L'interaction avec les élèves
  - h) \_\_\_\_\_ Le programme de mentorat offert par la division
  - i) Autres éléments qui ont facilité ton intégration à la profession, ou précisions sur les réponses choisies :
- 
- 

12. Quels étaient tes défis? (*coche la (ou les) réponse(s) appropriée(s)*)

- a) \_\_\_\_\_ De ne pas avoir eu l'occasion d'enseigner le(s) niveau(x) qui correspondait(aient) à ma formation
  - b) \_\_\_\_\_ De ne pas avoir eu l'occasion d'enseigner la(les) discipline(s) qui correspondait(aient) à ma formation
  - c) \_\_\_\_\_ Les obligations de participer aux activités parascolaires
  - d) \_\_\_\_\_ La gestion de classe
  - e) \_\_\_\_\_ Les relations parents-maîtres
  - f) \_\_\_\_\_ La planification
  - g) \_\_\_\_\_ L'évaluation des élèves
  - h) \_\_\_\_\_ Les techniques et les stratégies d'enseignement
  - i) \_\_\_\_\_ Mes compétences langagières
  - j) \_\_\_\_\_ La pédagogie différenciée
  - k) \_\_\_\_\_ Les relations avec les collègues
  - l) \_\_\_\_\_ Le manque de ressources
  - m) \_\_\_\_\_ Les compétences langagières des élèves
  - n) Autres éléments qui ont posé des défis, ou précisions sur les réponses choisies :
- 
-

13. Quels sont tes défis actuels?

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14. Qu'est-ce qui aurait pu t'appuyer davantage?

*(coche la (ou les) réponse(s) appropriée(s))*

- a)  Un programme de mentorat
- b)  L'occasion d'enseigner le(s) niveau(x) qui correspondait(aient) à ma formation
- c)  L'occasion d'enseigner la(les) discipline(s) qui correspondait(aient) à ma formation
- d)  Une administration de l'école plus attentive à mes besoins
- e)  Des collègues plus coopératifs
- f)  Un salaire équitable
- g)  Autres choses qui auraient pu être fait pour mieux appuyer ton insertion à la profession, ou précisions sur les réponses choisies :

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15. Quels sont tes plans de carrière? *(coche la (ou les) réponse(s) appropriée(s))*

- a)  Rester là où je suis
- b)  Changer de niveau
- c)  Changer d'école
- d)  Changer de programme
- e)  Poursuivre mes études
- f)  Poursuivre dans le domaine de l'orthopédagogie
- g)  Poursuivre dans le domaine de l'administration

h) Autre plans, ou précisions sur les réponses choisies :

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16. Est-ce que tu recommanderais la profession de l'enseignement à d'autres personnes? Explique ta réponse :

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17. As-tu des suggestions sur comment mieux appuyer les nouveaux enseignants?

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18. As-tu des suggestions sur comment mieux appuyer les étudiants en éducation?

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19. As-tu des commentaires sur le Programme de formation en milieu scolaire offert au Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface?

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