

# Flexibility lures professionals into teaching, study shows

## EDUCATION

A preliminary study into the reasons professionals are choosing to return to university to study teaching has found flexibility, security and an unfulfilled desire to teach is attracting people into the profession.

The study, 'A survey investigation of influences and choices in attracting graduates into teaching', was conducted by Dr Paul Richardson, associate dean (teaching) in Monash's Faculty of Education, and Dr Helen Watt from the Faculty of Education at the University of Sydney.

It aimed to determine the reasons that graduates of all disciplines decide to pursue teaching as a career.

Dr Richardson said the study, a preliminary investigation currently being further researched by the pair, was undertaken in response to the high number of professionals returning to university to study teaching.

"Every year at Monash we have people who come into the postgraduate course from very high-status occupations," he said.

"We have had lawyers, people who have medical degrees, people who have been engineers, lawyers, managers and chartered accountants – in fact people with careers that many teachers would aspire to."

The study identified five clusters of reasons for professionals choosing to change careers and become teachers – including more time for the family, financial security, enhanced social status, desire to work with adolescents and contribute to the community, and an unfulfilled aspiration to teach.

Dr Richardson said that while he was reticent about making generalisations from the preliminary study, it had identified interesting factors that could be investigated further. He said the study, which surveyed graduates



**Call of the classroom:** Monash's Dr Paul Richardson, right, and Dr Helen Watt from the University of Sydney have found that flexibility and security are luring professionals into teaching.

**Photo: Greg Ford**

studying teaching at a Melbourne university, found that they wanted a career that provided flexible working hours and allowed for more time with the family.

"Interestingly, this was true for both males and females and for those with and without children," he said.

The broader study, which will survey education students from Victoria and New South Wales, will also look at

the differences in the reasons school leavers and mature-age students choose teaching as a career.

It will include tracking school leavers from the first year of their teaching degrees through to the start of their careers and will seek to identify which students carry on to become teachers and which do not.

Dr Richardson said the preliminary study showed that teaching could no

longer be seen as a career of last resort. "In fact it is a career of choice for many people, people who could well choose – and indeed have chosen – other career pathways," he said.

– Diane Squires

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