

Examining the Impact of Special Education Funding on Teacher Turnover: A Reflective

Summary

Mayanthi Bhagya Basnayake

T00732426

Faculty of Education and Social Work, Thompson Rivers University

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Prof. Frederic Fovet

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Summary

Main objectives of the article

The article titled "Special Education Funding and Teacher Turnover" by Stock and Carriere (2021) comprehensively examines the impact of census-based funding on special education enrollment, teacher turnover, working conditions, compensation, and average class size. The study aims to thoroughly analyze census funding models compared to other funding models that follow non-census models in various constituent regions of the United States across time. In the non-census model, funding for special education is allocated based on specific metrics related to special education, such as the number of enrolled special education students. However, in the census-based funding model, special education funds are distributed based on the district's total student population or average daily attendance without considering the number of students enrolled in special education.

Then, the study presents the effects of the census funding model on special education teachers, elucidating their unique challenges and experiences.

Furthermore, the research aims to assess the state-level outcomes from census-based funding, including its effect on K12 per pupil spending. This article provides valuable insights into the relationship between funding policies and teacher turnover in special education through rigorous methodology and data analysis. It ultimately informs policymakers, educators, and stakeholders about balancing managing enrollment and retaining qualified teachers (Stock & Carriere, 2021). The study also builds upon several prior research in the field, ensuring its findings' strength and relevance to the evolving landscape of special education funding.

Key takeaways of the study

Stock and Carriere's (2021) study inquires about the relationship between census funding in special education and its consequences on teacher turnover. This insightful exploration draws its data to examine the teacher and school characteristics while considering potential state-level outcomes affected by varying special education funding systems through the Department of Education's Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TFS). To probe into the dynamics of special education funding and its influence on teacher turnover, the authors have used a differences-in-differences (DDD) model.

The initial topics of the research acknowledge the increase in enrollment of students in special education programs, particularly among those with milder disabilities, which then prompts the exploration into the major issues discussed. According to the research conducted, the following are the key concepts learned.

Impact of Census Funding on Teacher Turnover and Transition from Special Education to General Education: One of the central takeaways of this study is that special education teachers in states with census funding systems are more prone to changing schools than their peers in non-census states. This phenomenon points to the relationship between funding mechanisms and teacher retention. The research indicates that special education teachers in census states are five percentage points more likely to relocate after receiving funding than those in non-census states. This means that there is a fifty percent increase in moving. However, teachers do not necessarily stop teaching altogether, suggesting no detectable difference in the impact of census funding (Stock & Carriere, 2021, pp. 451-452). The research further illuminates in the conclusion (Stock & Carriere, 2021, p. 457) that implementing census funding systems

increases the probability of special education teachers transitioning to general education teaching.

Gender Disparities in Teacher Turnover: Significantly, the study highlights that the impact of census funding on teacher turnover is more pronounced among male teachers and that the number lessens when the average income of special education teachers is higher (Stock & Carriere, 2021, p.457). This gender disparity adds an essential layer of complexity to understanding teacher mobility in special education.

Income Levels and Teacher Turnover: In states with lower average incomes for special education teachers, the effects of census funding on teacher turnover are more prominent. Table 5 of the research article (p.454) indicates that the impact of census funding on turnover does not vary based on changes in incomes in comparable outside occupations like nursing and social work. Additionally, the estimated impact of census funding on special education teacher turnover is less when the average payments of special education teachers in the state are higher. This determines the role of financial incentives in shaping teacher decisions.

Other Aspects of Teaching: The study also evaluates factors apart from turnover. Table 2 of the article (p.452) provides the data analysis of these factors, and it indicates that census funding does not significantly affect teachers' hours worked per week, average class sizes, or annual salaries. This finding, which is also confirmed in the conclusion, suggests that funding systems primarily influence the retention and movement of special education teachers.

Special Education Enrollment and Teacher Specialization: The study recognizes that census funding impacts special education enrollment, particularly among students with "less severe disabilities in subjectively diagnosed disability categories" (Stock & Carriere, 2021, p.

445). This thought is supported by the authors of this study with references to the previous studies by Dhuey and Lipscomb (2011) and Mahitivanichcha and Parrish (2005). Furthermore, the research shows that census funding increases the likelihood of special education teachers transitioning into general education by 18 percentage points but does not increase teachers moving across state boundaries (Stock & Carriere, 2021, Table 2, p. 452). This highlights the specific influence of census funding on teacher career trajectories within the same state.

Limitations of Findings: The study's notes acknowledge limitations related to data used for the analysis of findings, such as inconsistencies in teachers' union status, teacher certifications across time, and the inability to identify school community sizes since the SASS does not properly inquire about it (see research notes, p. 457-458). Despite these shortcomings, the study remains credible due to the transparency and awareness of potential limitations. The strength of the data remains due to the references to previous research on teacher turnover and special education funding, demonstrating a thorough review of existing literature. The study also mentions the funding provided by the Montana State University Initiative for Regulation and Applied Economic Analysis (p.458), establishing credibility.

Implications and Future Research: This research educates policymakers and educators about the potential benefits and drawbacks associated with teacher mobility. A certain number of turnover rates may lead to better teacher-school alignments and higher productivity. For example, less teacher turnover resulting from fewer administrative responsibilities, including monitoring student Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), may also increase productivity. However, it is vital to understand that high turnover can worsen teacher shortages, resulting in significant transition costs when educators take on new responsibilities and remove resources

from the hiring process (Stock & Carriere, 2021, p. 447). This complex side of turnover draws attention to the fine line separating the problems with high turnover rates from the advantages of better matching and productivity. Understanding these dynamics can guide future research to improve teacher retention and special education programs' quality in schools.

Connections to the Course Content and Discussions

Apart from the above-shared thoughts extracted from the article, classroom discussions concerning Professor Fovet's presentation (2023) can be considered when drawing similarities to the knowledge in the study by Stock and Carriere (2021).

Professor Fovet's presentation highlights a crucial problem in education funding, which is the emphasis on individual interventions, leaving the more significant educational transformation insufficiently funded. This point aligns with the study by Stock and Carriere (2021), which investigates the impact of funding systems on special education and suggests that census funding significantly influences teacher turnover, potentially affecting pedagogical approaches.

Furthermore, the presentation underscores that teachers are often expected to follow professional development (PD) independently, with limited resources and support. This situation resonates with Stock and Carriere's findings, which reveal that the impact of census funding on teacher turnover and specialization is more pronounced in states with lower average incomes for special education teachers. PD's lack of financial resources could potentially obstruct the integration of new pedagogical approaches, such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Both sources discuss the issue of fragmented and under-resourced professional development. Professor Fovet (2023) points out the current state of PD in Canadian schools as "fragmented, under-resourced, infrequent, and rarely offering opportunities for hands-on

integration." Stock and Carriere's study does not directly address the quality of PD, but it does emphasize the need for professional development in the context of special education funding and teacher turnover, teacher specialty, special education enrollment, state education spending, average class sizes, and teacher effort. Therefore, this may imply the importance of professional development in addressing these issues.

The presentation touches on the effects of 20 years of neoliberal policies in the K-12 sector, resulting in limited growth in funding and the persistent call to "do more with less." This lack of funding growth may discourage teachers from embracing inclusive practices, which resonated with the ideas in Stock and Carriere's research regarding the challenges of teacher turnover in special education that changing teacher responsibilities might affect teacher turnover. Then, the gravity of the situation is echoed by referring to the previous research by Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016), who "estimate that the U.S. spends over \$8 billion annually to replace teachers who leave teaching or move across districts."

Professor Fovet's discussion (2023) of school stratification resulting from parental choice aligns with the broader concept of "school finance reforms" mentioned in Stock and Carriere's study. The research suggests that the funding model can impact teacher turnover, which has significant consequences. When turnover occurs, there is a risk of hiring less experienced and less prepared teachers as replacements, which can lead to potential disruptions in the quality of relationships and trust among teachers and between teachers and students (Stock & Carriere, 2021). Further, this scenario may affect the overall quality of education. Moreover, when schools with limited resources struggle to attract and retain experienced teachers due to high turnover rates, the problem of school stratification can be further aggravated (Stock & Carriere, 2021).

While there is no direct reference to parental choice and school reputation, it highlights the possible repercussions of teacher turnover on school quality and relationships.

Conclusion

Stock and Carrier's (2021) study provides a comprehensive view of the complex relationship between special education funding and teacher turnover, with essential factors such as census-based funding, including teacher mobility, and its impact on the quality of inclusive education. These insights from the research are discussed in the context of classroom discussion, highlighting the economic challenges and the need for holistic solutions in special education. This data provide valuable guidance for policymakers and educators in navigating the process of special education funding and teachers intending to offer a high-quality educational experience for all students.

References

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