Novice Second-Career Teachers: Experiences and Meaning-Making of the Transition Process

Paula Dennisse Núñez del Rosario
Western Michigan University, paulad.nunez@gmail.com

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NOVICE SECOND-CAREER TEACHERS: EXPERIENCES AND MEANING-MAKING OF THE TRANSITION PROCESS

by

Paula Dennisse Núñez del Rosario

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology Western Michigan University December 2020

Doctoral Committee:

Regena Nelson, Ph.D., Chair
Patricia Reeves, Ph.D., Member
Marcia Fetters, Ph.D., Member
The world we live in is in constant change. During change, people focus on the observable part of what is not there anymore and what has come in its place, not being conscious of the adaptation process that underlies the change: the transition. The transition is a process that has different phases and the development of the process is differentiated depending on the individual. Transition is also directly related to the type of experience. Although circumstances differ among individuals, it is possible to say that there are some common aspects in terms of challenges faced by all novice teachers, both first-year teachers, and second-career teachers. These challenges were summarized in four categories: personal; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; relationships; and unsupportive environments. Each of them has a significant effect on teachers’ success during their first years.

This study is a multiple case study of the transition process that Dominican second-career teachers in K-5 classrooms undergo when changing to the teaching career. After analyzing data from semi-structured interviews, Stimulated Recalled Interviews (SRI), observations, and journals from the participants, an in-depth description of these professionals, their journey, and their meaning-making process was described.

As evidenced by the data collected, making meaning processes and transitions varies among individuals, supported by their previous experience. The process of reflecting on the
teaching practice and analyzing situations helped the participants become conscious of their
meaning-making process.

Understanding the personal, emotional, and professional implications of the transition into
teaching of these second-career teachers should be considered in the professional preparation of
this group of professionals. The particularities of the meaning-making process pose a challenge
for how to support this minority group professionally. Nevertheless, findings show the need to
differentiate and personalize the career support and training for second-career teachers.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are so many people to be thankful to. I will never be able to say that this Ph. D. is my accomplishment. It is the result of the work of so many people. My family that has always supported me in everything I do. The DR Ph.D. cohort, the group of 25 professionals, some of which can now be called doctors, some others soon to be, have had each other’s back, including mine, for 5 years as we encourage each other to complete dissertation! My always present advisor, Dr. Nelson that with kindness, patience, and empathy has guided me all these years. My respect and admiration for your work dear Dr. Nelson! I also want to thank Dr. Reeves and Dr. Fetters for agreeing to be part of my committee.

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Paula Dennisse Núñez del Rosario
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ ii  
LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. vi  
LIST OF FIGURES .............................................................................................................. vii  

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................ 1  
  Background .................................................................................................................. 1  
  Problem Statement .................................................................................................... 6  
  Literature Deficiency Statement ............................................................................. 9  
  Significance of Study .................................................................................................. 10  
  Purpose Statement ...................................................................................................... 10  
  Research Questions .................................................................................................... 11  
  Conceptual Framework and Narrative ..................................................................... 11  
  Methods Overview ..................................................................................................... 13  
  Chapter I Closure ....................................................................................................... 14  

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................... 15  
  Transitions ................................................................................................................ 15  
  The Challenges of a New Teacher ............................................................................. 18  
  Personal Challenge .................................................................................................... 19  
  Professional Challenge ............................................................................................... 20  
  Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment ................................................................. 20  
  Relationship with Students and Student Learning .................................................. 21  
  Unsupportive Environment ........................................................................................ 23
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Challenges of a Second Career Teacher</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Novice Second-Career Teacher as an Adult Learner</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Learning</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design, Approach, and Rationale</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections of My Identity</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population, Sample and Setting</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access and Recruitment</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Source</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Procedures</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations and Delimitations</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. FINDINGS</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Research Process</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants of the Study</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bubbles</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blossom</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buttercup</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions Review and Findings</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Finding</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitioning into the teaching field</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning making of the transition and the experience</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of previous career into the teaching</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents—Continued

V. DISCUSSION........................................................................................................... 81
    Second-Career Teachers Motivations................................................................. 81
    Transition and Meaning Making......................................................................... 82
    Second-Career Teachers as Novice Teachers.................................................. 87
    The Transformation............................................................................................. 91
    Research and Policy Recommendations.......................................................... 92
REFERENCES.................................................................................................................. 95

APPENDICES
    A. Informed Consent in English............................................................................ 105
    B. Informed Consent in Spanish............................................................................ 112
    C. Interview Guide................................................................................................. 119
    D. Post-Interview Reflection Guide....................................................................... 121
    E. Stimulated Recalled Interview Guide............................................................... 122
    F. HSIRB Approval Letter ..................................................................................... 123
LIST OF TABLES

1. Timeline of the Data Collection for Each Teacher.......................... 45
2. Participants Information............................................................. 46
3. Quotes of Ms. Blossom Meaning Making Process............................ 75
4. Quotes of Ms. Bubbles Meaning Making Process............................. 77
5. Quotes of Mr. Buttercup Meaning Making Process........................... 77
6. Influence of the Previous Career.................................................. 78
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Conceptual Framework ............................................................. 12
2. Data Representation of a Second-Career Professional’s Teaching Journey… 30
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The world we live in is in constant change. The weather changes, the months change, policies change, and people experience change one way or another. People change address, vehicles, professions, habits, spouses, and so on. Out of all these changes, people focus on the observable part of what is not there anymore and what has come in its place, but they may not be as conscious of the adaptation process that underlies the change: the process that each person goes through when facing a change, the transition. The following study presents multiple case studies on the transition process that second-career professionals undergo when changing to a teaching career. This study will examine how a group of Dominican second-career teachers in K-5 classrooms describe and make meaning of their first-year teaching experience and the transition process that it entails. The sample for this study will be Dominican novice second-career teachers who are experiencing their first year as practicing teachers in Dominican schools. The findings of this study will provide information about the nature, reality, and needs of second-career teachers, a population that is increasing in Dominican schools.

Background

Schools are in a difficult position since many first career teachers are leaving the field. Some of the reasons for leaving mentioned by Oliver (2005) are “retirements, life changes, or general dissatisfaction with teaching in general” (p. 41). When teachers leave, it creates vacancies that are difficult to fill, especially with qualified teachers (Ingersoll, 2003; Torres, 2006). The increase in enrollment in K-5 schools each year aggravates the situation because more positions are needed and there are fewer teachers who can fill them. As a result, districts and education governors have embraced a solution to address this situation. Due to the limited
number of individuals choosing teaching as a career, the school systems have considered non-teaching professionals to fill their teaching positions (Torres, 2006). This has created a need at the government level to design different preparation routes for non-teaching professionals becoming teachers.

**Second-Career Teachers**

Non-teaching professionals joining the classrooms are known as *second-career* teachers. These professionals, after spending time in different career backgrounds, have decided to transition into the world of teaching. Second-career teachers’ career backgrounds are vastly discussed in a wide range of literature (Castro & Bawlm, 2009; Richardson & Watt, 2005; Tigchelaar, Brouwer & Korthagen, 2008). The richness of second-career teachers’ backgrounds is not only due to the different previous careers they held but also based on their diverse experiences, motives, and interests that permeate their teaching experience.

The teaching experiences of second-career teachers are influenced by the nature of their previous careers (Chambers 2002; Mayotte, 2003). This occurs because the teachers who previously worked in a different career developed knowledge, dispositions, mental processes, social and emotional orientations, and identities related to their roles and responsibilities in their previous careers (Shepherd & William, 2016). Although their knowledge and disposition are related to their previous career, it is still a new experience, making them novice professionals in the teaching field.

**Novice Teachers**

Novice teachers are defined as education professionals with three to five years of teaching experience. The first years have a significant impact on their professional future because this is when new professionals develop their identity as teachers (Goh, Yusuf & Wong, 2017). Novice
teachers are also known as early-career professionals, beginning teachers, and early career teachers. Generally, when the literature refers to novice teachers it is implied that they do not have any other professional experience and they have recently completed their preparation programs.

Novice teachers’ development has been a topic of study for several years due to the struggles they face in their beginning years. Some of the novice teachers’ struggles during the first years are both practical and technical, such as handling behavior issues, considering special needs students, understanding grade content, dealing with differentiation, grading, etc. (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014). Other challenges for novice teachers are mostly related to content knowledge, discipline management, and lack of support from the administration (Sali & Kecik, 2018). These challenges are strictly related to the teaching profession, therefore, it is expected that novice second-career teachers would also be struggling with related issues.

Novice second-career teachers not only face the struggles that a beginning teacher faces, but also deal with the transition process that a career change entails. When novice second-career teachers make the change to a career as a teacher, they leave behind routines, habits, mental processes, and identities that shaped their previous career. This action of leaving behind what they know, to engage in the unknown is a significant change and the beginning of a transition.

Motivations

The literature on second-career teachers reflects a range of factors that impact these teachers’ motivation. Some researchers explain that career-switchers choose to become teachers because of a long-held desire to teach (Powers, 2002; Richardson & Watt, 2005; Tigchelaar et al., 2010). These authors state that those professionals chose another career path because of their
circumstances at the moment, such as lucrative financial offers, job opportunities, and parents’ pressure to choose a different career.

The next most common motivations for second-career teachers are personal satisfaction and the flexibility of time/vacations that teaching offers. Several authors (Chambers, 2010; Lee, 2011; Tigchelaar et al., 2010) explain that many professionals choose teaching because the school schedule provides them with more time to spend with family. During regular working days, they are able to work during the time that their own children are in school. Additionally, they share the same vacation time as their children, allowing them to spend more time with family and eliminating the need to find a caregiver to be with their children while they are working.

**Change and Transition**

Change is often seen as the equivalent of transition. However, Bridges (2009) explains that change is situational and temporal; it involves ending and beginning. For example, if a doctor stops working in a hospital and starts teaching fifth graders, the doctor has made a change, he has ended his work as a doctor and begun his work as a teacher. In making that change, the doctor also undergoes a period of transition.

Transitions have a psychological connotation that is related to one’s behavior, mind, feelings, and thoughts. The nature of the change determines the nature of the psychological transition. In the example of the doctor who transitions to becoming a teacher, the psychological transition involves adapting the mental processes that occur in the mind of a doctor to those that are required of a teacher; thus, part of the process of transitioning to becoming a teacher involves the acquisition and application of new knowledge and a shift in the mental processes for applying that knowledge to the requirements of his new role (Bridges, 2009).
The doctor who becomes a teacher faces other psychological shifts that might involve both social and emotional processes. This shift relates to new ways of interacting with people, for new purposes, in new settings. The doctor who becomes a teacher must adjust mentally and utilize or develop new understandings and new ways of thinking and acting to fulfill his new role. For instance, he must understand the way children think and learn; he must cultivate the mindset of a facilitator of learning rather than that of a healer. He must adjust to new working relationships and be ready to make many other adjustments as he makes meaning of all the ramifications of his change from doctor to teacher. The transition required of him because of this career change involves additional mental, physical, social, and emotional shifts or adaptations to the requirements of his new career role. These shifts make up the process of transition and the nature of this transition reflects the situational nature of the change that causes the transition (Bridges, 2009).

**Becoming a Second-Career Teacher in the Dominican Republic**

For many years, the Dominican Republic has faced the issue of having insufficient teachers with a traditional degree in education (first-career teachers) to fill the teaching demands in K-5 schools. By 2012, statistics showed that only 49% of teachers in the classrooms had an Education Degree. The 51% remaining either had technical teaching preparation, or no other degree than the high school one (Beca, 2012). Currently, there is no available information related to the specific percentage of second-career teachers in Dominican education, although, according to Beca (2012) it is possible to infer that second-career teachers represent around 26% of Dominican teachers. One of the issues with this population of teachers in the Dominican Republic is that they have gaps in their training, meaning that the preparation they receive lacks the appropriate content needed to succeed in the classroom (Beca, 2012).
The Dominican Republic opened an alternative certification route for the non-teaching professionals that were entering the schools. In 2001, a certification program named “Habilitación Docente” was open to provide pedagogical knowledge to second-career teachers and grant them teaching credentials. It was not until 2004 that the credentials obtained through the certification program became mandatory before becoming a practicing K-5 teacher. Every teacher working in a school is required to have this certification (Ministerio de Educación, 2004).

There has not been any study providing empirical information about the quality or effectiveness of the Certification Program in preparing second-career teachers to succeed in their classroom experience. Nevertheless, the curriculum of the Certification Program was under revision by the Ministry of Education and the National Institute for Teacher Training and Formation (INAFOCAM, acronyms in Spanish). This revision has resulted in the Certification Program becoming a 2-year master’s program. Teachers will be prepared to teach content-specific subjects. This means that the certification program is now differentiated between early education and high school subject areas. However, examination of the certification program curriculum reveals that the program does not specifically address the issues second-career professionals may encounter as they transition from their previous career to a new career in teaching.

**Problem Statement**

Since the shortage of teachers is a worldwide issue, schools around the world are opening their doors to second-career teachers (Warmack, 2008). These professionals have experience in a non-teaching career but for different reasons have made the change into teaching as their career. The diversity of second-career teachers has been widely discussed. Various studies show that second-career teachers hold different previous experiences, motives, and interests for teaching.
(Castro & Bawlm, 2009; Tigchelaar, Brouwer, & Korthagen, 2008). While it is clear that previous non-teaching career experience plays a role in many aspects of how a teacher makes the transition to teaching from that previous career, it is not clear how these professionals experience their first years as teachers and make meaning of the transition. Knowing the professional and personal path that second-career teachers undergo may contribute to understanding the specific needs of this growing population, novice second-career teachers.

**Researchable Problem**

Researchers have studied transitions in different areas of individuals’ lives, personally and professionally (Brennan, 2001; Lee, 2007). Nonetheless, the contextual aspects of second-career teachers’ transition into the classroom are not clearly understood, as there has been minimal research to address this specific type of transition. Since, as discussed above, change is situational, and change involves transitions that are influenced by the type of change, it should be assumed that the complex and multi-faceted nature of transitions from one career to another must be understood both situationally and contextually. Such is the case of the continuously growing population of second-career professionals who choose to change from a non-teaching career to one in the teaching field.

The second-career teachers’ career change is further delineated by the previous career and the context in which the change to a teaching career occurs. For instance, people enter into and function in the teaching profession in a variety of ways depending upon where they live and work. One country’s process for becoming a teacher and context for serving as a teacher may look entirely different from that of another country. Therefore, the nature of the change from a non-teaching career to a teaching career is entirely situational and so will be the nature of the transition from the non-teaching to the teaching career. Thus, it can be assumed that studies of
the transition from non-teaching to teaching careers in one country’s context cannot fully describe that same transition in another country’s context.

**Studies Addressing the Problem**

The experiences of second-career professionals and their presence in the classrooms have also begun to be a focus of research in recent years in various contexts (Lee, 2011). These studies explore the second-career teachers’ background with attention to the relation it might have with the way they embrace the new career. The findings of these studies pointed out that previous career preparation and experiences influence the teacher’s classroom experience (Chambers 2002; Mayotte, 2003). Thus, it can be assumed that second career teachers bring specific competencies from their previous careers into their work as teachers.

The competencies that second-career teachers develop during their previous careers, and later, put into practice as needed, are specifically related to the content that they teach. For example, the doctor who decides to become a science teacher has both content and scientific experiential knowledge that a traditionally trained science teacher may lack. Although this knowledge can be translated into an advantage for the doctor’s transition it does not exempt the doctor from living other aspects of the novice experience of the first year as a practicing teacher.

Concerning the advantages of the previous career of a second-career, no significant differences have been reported in second-career teachers’ performance and outcomes as compared to first-career teachers (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, O’Brien & Wyckoff, 2011; Treviño, 2013). This could mean that even though the previous career experience supports the transition process of second-career teachers, other aspects that are specific from the teaching profession need to be considered; aspects that traditionally trained teachers may acquire during their preparation years. Contrasting the content advantage of a second-career teacher (whose first
career aligns with the content they teach) with the profession-specific knowledge of a traditionally trained teacher, it is possible to say that the learning curve that each group of teachers will have to go through would be the same because one group will have to learn the content and the other group will have to learn pedagogy.

Regarding why non-teaching professionals decide to become second-career teachers. Richardson and Watt (2005) identified five major reasons for which second-career teachers change careers: personal and social status, career fit, prior considerations, financial reward, and family time. On a broader scale, several non-teaching professionals find the flexibility of a teaching schedule and the availability that it gives them to spend time with their families very gratifying. They also appreciate that the talents and knowledge acquired in the previous career are valued in the teaching field.

**Literature Deficiency Statement**

While there are several studies about second-career teachers around the world (Karge, Pierson, & Robinson, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Unruh & Holt, 2010), studies related to second-career teaching professionals are very limited in the Dominican Republic context. In addition, most studies focus on the preparation of these professionals (Braam, Lawrenz, & Kirchhoff, 2011; Bowe, Ham, 2010; Camacho & Rogero, 2016; Kee, 2012; Linek, Sampson, Haas, Sadler, Moore, & Nylan, 2012) and evaluation of the teacher certification programs. Nevertheless, no studies have explored the transition process that they go through and the significance that this experience has on them. This study will not include literature about why second-career teachers choose to change careers because it will be focused on the transition process of the teacher despite their motivation to change.
Significance of the Study

Understanding the personal, emotional, and professional implications that the transition into teaching can have for a second-career teacher could enlighten many of the decisions that involve the preparation of these professionals. This study could shed light on how second-career professionals make meaning of their new professional challenge. The study’s findings could later be used to provide appropriate personal and career support to these important new members of the teaching community.

Existing studies about second-career teachers explore how these professionals integrate into their new teaching jobs (Haggard, Slostad, & Winterton, 2006), however, they do not address the emotional components of the second-career professionals’ lived experiences. Other studies provide information on the chosen second-career teachers’ preparation route (Cohen-Vogel & Smith, 2007), how they value the support or mentoring program that they are part of during their first teaching year (Nagy & Wang, 2007), and how efficient they are in their new jobs due to their first career.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple case study is to explore how a sample of Dominican novice second-career teachers make meaning of their transition process from a previous professional career into a teaching career and describe their experience during their first-years as practicing teachers. For this study, second-career teachers will be defined as those practicing K-5 teachers who started teaching after having acquired a previous profession. This study will examine teachers’ transition process and their current teaching experience.
Research Questions

The overarching research question is: How does a sample of novice Dominican K-5 second-career teachers describe their first-year teaching experience and make meaning of the transition process that it entails?

The sub-questions are:

(a) How do second-career professionals describe their transition into the teaching field?
(b) How do second-career professionals make meaning of the transition process they experience?
(c) How do second-career professionals make meaning of their experience as first-year teachers?
(d) How do second-career professionals describe the way their previous career influences their new teaching experience?

Conceptual Framework and Narrative

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 shows the main aspects of this study. The first two aspects, the non-teaching professionals and the second-career teachers build the foundation of the study because they will help with understanding who the professionals are that decide to become second-career teachers. With second-career teachers as the center of this study, I will examine the lived experiences of these professionals to gain a better understanding of the transition process they undergo to enter the teaching profession. Authors such as Lee (2011) and Tigchelaar, Brouwer, and Vermunt (2010) explain that the reasons why non-teaching professionals are motivated to become teachers vary extensively depending on the individual. This study will expand the conversation on how non-teaching professionals, make the transition
to become second-career teachers, specifically in the Dominican Republic context, and how they describe their experiences during their first years as teachers.

As illustrated in Figure 1, this study will utilize Bridges’ (2010) transition framework for understanding Dominican second-career teachers’ transition to their new career. It describes three stages that people undergo when experiencing a transition process. The stages are: (a) the ending when the old experience is no longer going to continue; (b) the neutral zone, in between the old and the new experience; and (c) the new beginning. This last stage is described by Bridges (2009) as the time when people develop a new identity. In this new identity, the individual has gone through a significant learning path, that in the context of this study will be seen as an adult learning experience.

One of the aims of this study is to explore how Dominican second-career teachers describe and understand their transformation. I will use Mezirow’s (1994) theory of transformative learning. This theory states that adults implement change in a frame of reference. Mezirow
describes these frames of reference as the lenses that we use to see and understand experiences. He explains that in adulthood, learning happens when people use a prior interpretation to “construct a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience to guide future action” (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). It is exactly the process of constructing that interpretation that helps the adult make meaning of any given experience.

Additionally, the transition process as well as the transformation process will be analyzed considering Bandura’s social cognition theory. This theory establishes that individuals’ behavior is a reflection of their experiences, the actions of others, and the environmental factors. Bandura emphasizes that people learn from others based on what they see and that learning is an internal process.

**Methods Overview**

This multiple case study will be conducted using the qualitative research method. The population will be K-5 second-career teachers who are experiencing their first year of teaching. I will first conduct a semi-structured interview, and I will spend a full day in their classrooms to observe their teaching and demeanor. After my visit, I will re-interview participants to learn about their experiences regarding the observation day. Then, I will ask participants to select a subject or grade (depending on their level) in which they feel more comfortable teaching. I will videotape the performance of the teacher in the selected area during three different moments of the school year. Next, I will have a stimulated recall interview with each participant to obtain reflections about their performance. Finally, I will invite participants to engage in journaling activities to analyze that documentation and triangulate my observations and interviews findings.
Chapter I Closure

Change is not necessarily the equivalence of transition because the second implies a psychological process that covers different areas of each person’s development. The lenses chosen to approach the transition could also determine the flow of the experience. This study examined the transition process that Dominican novice second-career professionals undergo when changing to a teaching career. By conducting a multiple case study, I gathered information to determine how a group of Dominican second-career teachers in K-5 classrooms describe and make meaning of their first years of teaching experience and the transition process that it entails. Chapter two offers a review of the literature for background on the topic.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand how Dominican novice second-career teachers make meaning of their transition process into the teaching career, I will define what a transition is since the proper understanding of this concept is significantly important for the development of the study. Then, I will present the challenges that novice teachers face at the beginning of their careers and the ones experienced by novice second-career teachers. Then, I will describe the learning characteristics of the second-career teacher as an adult learner who seeks to achieve transformation.

Transitions

As explained in chapter one, the word transition is commonly used interchangeably with change. To better understand the real meaning of the term, it is necessary to elaborate on the concept of transition and the process it involves. For instance, Bridges (2009) states that transition is a psychological part of the change. The author emphasizes that although change can happen every day and everywhere, it does not always mean that people transition. This psychological part covers mental processes and behaviors. Based on this conception, Bridges was able to identify three phases in the process of change that help people gradually move toward the new situation. He explained the process in the following steps:

(a) The first to happen is the ending of the old. This is the part of the process in which people are dealing with loss, what they are leaving behind, what is discontinued in their lives. During this process of accepting that ending, people experience denial, shock, frustration, as they move to the neutral zone.
(b) In the neutral zone, people are navigating two waters, what they just left and what is about to begin. This is a stage of acceptance; the person moves forward and starts feeling comfortable with the new beginning.

(c) Last comes the new beginning that Bridges (2009) describes as the culmination of the transition.

As Bridges (2009) explains, “the transition starts with an ending and finishes with a beginning” (p.5). Nevertheless, the emphasis is on the path that people walk from that ending to that new destination. The path then becomes the critical point, and what happens during that time will determine the type of outcomes that the person will have during the transition.

Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2011) define transition as “a turning point or a period between two periods of stability” (p. 39). They explain that there are three types of transitions: anticipated (you know about them), non-anticipated (you do not know what will happen), and nonevents (you are expecting it, but it does not happen). They add that no matter the type of transition, it will have a different meaning for each person according to the person’s perspective, the context, and the impact that the transition has in their lives.

Schlossberg (1981) developed a transition framework to help in the understanding of the transition process that adults experience in everyday life. The framework sought to explain how transition is managed. Schlossberg noticed that how one copes with transition is influenced by “The Four Ss”: situation, self, supports, and strategies (Schlossberg, 2008). She explains that a transition process can be affected by the situation that a person is going through when the change happens; the person’s attitude towards the situation (self); the web of support that the person might count on such as family and friends; and the strategies that the person uses to change, reframe and cope with change.
Change impacts the role that a person plays in a given position and will likely impact the person’s routine, mindset, and environment. Being able to adapt to the new stage is the transition that the person will experience. As Schlossberg (2011) explains, the challenge in change is being able to experience a positive transition. She states that the four Ss (situation, self, support, and strategies) provide the path that will allow a positive transition process to happen.

Bridges (2009) expands on the idea of positive transitions by emphasizing the importance of providing support to people when dealing with a transition. Schlossberg (2011) and Bridges (2009) agreed on the fact that the transition is a slow process. It takes time and it is different for each person. Nevertheless, both researchers agree that an effective transition plan must include a significant web of support.

Teachers that experience transition will also have a variety of ways to experiment and recall their process. These differences will depend on each person’s journey. Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2011) posit that to understand the meaning that a transition has for a person, it is necessary to consider the type of transition, the perspective, the context, and the impact. Bridges (2009) advocates for the consideration that transitions do not begin with the introduction of something new but rather with the end of something old. In the case of a new teacher, the end of the period of being a student-teacher represents the beginning of the transition. The neutral zone will be the time in which the new teacher gets familiar with his or her responsibilities, students, leaders, parents, and the particularities of the teaching job. The teachers might experience denial as they begin to make the connection from the theory they learned as a student and the reality they face as a teacher in the classroom. Teachers will embrace the new beginning once they gain control over their new role. This process will be a different
experience for every teacher depending on their life setting and support web. No matter the way it is presented, the reality is that transitions are challenging for people.

In summary, the transition is a process that has different phases and the development of the process is differentiated depending on the individual. The transition is also directly related to the type of experience. Thus, the question now is: what are the experiences that novice second-career teachers are most likely to have? Well, according to Rutherford (2009) and Goodwin (2012), it will be the same as the once new first-career teachers had.

**The Challenges of a New Teacher**

Rutherford (2009), in her book “The 21st Century Mentor’s Handbook,” presents a list of 8 things that appear as regular challenges and concerns of novice teachers. These challenges are (a) personal; (b) professional; (c) curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (d) relationships with students and focus on student learning; (e) organizational systems for the teacher, the classroom, and students; (f) school/district policies and procedures; (g) collegial interactions; and (h) parents and community. More recent literature, such as Goodwin (2012) summarizes the challenges of novice teachers with three elements: (a) classroom management; (b) curriculum freedom; and (c) unsupportive environments.

After analyzing both authors’ classification, I have collapsed them into five categories: (a) personal challenge; (b) professional challenge; (c) curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (d) relationships with students and student learning; and (e) unsupportive environments. I will discuss the different categories with studies that support them to explain the challenges.
**Personal Challenge**

Rutherford (2009) explains that the nature of the human being is to figure out their personal lives before being able to comply with other aspects of life. She explains that the term “novice teachers” usually refers to those professionals that are recently coming out of the universities. Generally, these teachers are young adults that have their first formal job experiences at this point. Therefore, they might be experiencing changes in several aspects of their lives along with the new role of becoming teachers. Juggling personal responsibilities and being a new teacher could represent a challenge for these novice professionals, as it is clear that:

> It is not until one’s basic needs are met that one can continue to cope with whatever else comes their way (Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Witte, Soenens, and Lens, 2010). Therefore, new teachers must learn to manage basic routines that will be the foundation of their new lifestyle and career.

Friesen and Besley (2013) studied the development of teacher identity during the first teaching years by surveying 109 students in an initial teacher preparation program in New Zealand. Their findings revealed that beginner teachers with a solid personal identity were able to develop a professional identity, and as a result were more effective teachers. They concluded that having balanced personal lives contribute to the development of higher levels of teacher identity.

Adiele and Abraham (2013) in their study about the achievement of Maslow’s Needs Hierarchy Theory, found after surveying 245 secondary school teachers in Nigeria, that the fulfillment of teachers’ basic needs is closely related to their levels of productivity, and their overall motivation. Teachers must have their basic/personal needs met to focus on the new journey.
Under the umbrella of the personal challenges, Rutherford also mentions the establishment of personal relationships, the identification with the school community, and the emotional aspects of the profession. Klassen, Durksen, Hashmi, Kim, Longden, Metsäpelto, Poikkeus, and Györi (2018) refer to the emotional aspects of the profession as the non-cognitive attributes of novice teachers. In their study of more than 20 teachers from four different countries, they sought to identify those necessary non-cognitive attributes that new teachers need. The findings revealed that although the attributes varied depending on the country, there were a few of them that appeared to be common. The attributes were empathy, communication, organization and planning, resilience, and adaptability. This suggests that despite the cultural differences, there are essential effective teaching traits that continue to be universal.

**Professional Challenge**

According to Rutherford (2009), the professional challenge is understanding professional expectations. Rutherford (2009) explains that novice teachers face professional challenges, in addition to instructional challenges. They must learn which professional issues, such as medical benefits, tax payment, and contracts, require special attention as life becomes more complex. Novice teachers are also learning about the social, political, and civil responsibilities of the profession.

**Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are some of the most common challenges reported by novice teachers (Confait, 2015; Lew & Nelson, 2016; Maclellan, 2004). Novice teachers tend to have a difficult time implementing the curriculum. Lavigne and Bozack (2015) explain that some teacher preparation programs may not address specific areas of the curriculum and novice teachers have reported feeling lost during the first years of their career. The lack of curriculum or
curricular freedom is a burden for novice teachers (Goodwin, 2012). In an attempt to address this situation, several educational school districts in the states use commercial curriculum packages. These curriculum packages may limit teachers’ creativity. In other words, teachers are only teaching the content and activities in the curriculum. An example of a category of commercial curriculum packages is the basal series, in the Language Arts. These series include specific lesson activities for each grade level. These curricula were created to align with the standards. However, by relying on them, novice teachers tend to focus more on completing lesson activities rather than responding to their students’ individual needs.

Yazan (2016) explains that for novice teachers, instruction becomes a challenge because they have difficulties dealing with curriculum models that are too structured and those that do not provide any structure. If teachers aren’t able to engage students with the curriculum, they will encounter classroom management problems.

Novice teachers also tend to struggle with the concept and use of assessment; few teachers understand how to implement effective assessment that reflects their lesson plans’ learning goals. Nevertheless, Lew and Nelson (2016) explain that when novice teachers receive professional development in assessment, they develop a strong understanding of the use of assessment as a tool to monitor student’s progress.

**Relationship with Students and Student Learning**

The category of relationship with students and learning can be discussed along with the organizational system for the teacher, the classroom, and the student category. The first one deals with the positive relations that help students learn. The second one deals with the different structures that need to be in place for students to have a positive learning environment and an effective learning experience.
Frymier and Houser (2000) explain that a good relationship with students is a significant predictor of learning. In their study of students’ perception of the importance of teachers’ communication skills for good teaching, Frymier and Houser found that the referential skill and the ego support skill were perceived as the most necessary skills for a teacher. The referential skill refers to the teachers’ ability to communicate content knowledge in effective ways, and the ego support skills refer to the teacher’s ability to motivate students and respond to their emotional needs.

The student-teacher relationship is an important factor in the learning process. Murray and Malmgren (2005) implemented a teacher-student relationship program in a high-poverty urban school to assess the impact that it could have on students’ socioemotional and academic behavior. They found that a positive and supportive relationship with a teacher impacted students’ academic performance.

Moreover, a positive relationship with students minimize disruptions and maximizes academic instruction (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2011). The lack of disruption that allows instruction is positive classroom management. For novice teachers, classroom management is hard due to the emotional work involved in building positive relationships. Earning students’ respect and showing respect to students comes from a combination of teacher’s personal attributes, that distinguish that teacher from other teachers, and establishing classroom routines. Setting up systems and structures; managing a classroom in terms of behavior and learning; and developing positive and supportive relationships become a major challenge for novice teachers.

Although there are ways in which teachers achieve positive classroom management skills, and structure, it generally requires strong teaching knowledge. For example, Wong and Wong (2014) posit that engaging lessons contribute to a well-managed classroom; and novice teachers
are still building their ability to develop engaging lessons. When they master this ability, they will also master their classroom management.

**Unsupportive Environment**

In the unsupportive environment category, I have grouped three sub-categories: school/district policies and procedures, collegial interaction, and parents. I grouped them because the literature describes these sub-categories as the little things that add to the hard work of being a novice teacher. This might be due to the lack of control that teachers have over these three aspects of the school environment.

When Rutherford (2009) talks about policies and procedures being a challenge for novice teachers, she refers to school aspects such as grading, drills, permission requests, and those little things that can be overwhelming even for veteran teachers. Le Maistre and Pare (2010) explain that having control over these practicalities of the teaching profession is a skill that requires time and experience. They also represent a significant part of novice teachers’ stress during their first years of teaching.

Regarding the collegial interactions, several studies highlight the difficulties that teachers may encounter when arriving at a school as the new teacher. These difficulties range from having colleagues that refuse to collaborate with them, veteran teachers that question their preparedness, assigned mentors that do not follow up, to administrators that pretend not to notice any of these issues (Fry, 2007; Goodwin, 2012; Hover & Yeager, 2004). All of them represent a challenge for novice teachers because they force the teacher to invest energy in dealing with interpersonal conflicts instead of focusing on instructional matters.

The interaction with parents is always an important factor for students’ learning and well-being. Pirchio, Passiatore, Tritrini, and Taeschner (2013) studied the role of the relationship
between parents and educators. They found that a positive relationship contributes to students’ behavior, well-being, and learning. Nevertheless, there are different kinds of parents in every school, and each one of them wants the best for their children in their own way.

Sometimes teachers can have a hard time dealing with parents because they require constant attention and request feedback on their children’s progress. For a novice teacher, this can be threatening if he or she has not been able to put in place good systems. Tschanne-Moran and Woolfolk (2006) studied teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs and found that for novice teachers, a significant part of their satisfaction with their professional performance comes from the parents’ feedback and support. Therefore, to novice teachers’ parents represent a challenge that if mastered, could become a support system for them.

**The Challenges of a Second Career Teacher**

The novice second-career teachers’ literature address almost the same challenges as the regular novice teachers with the sole difference of the content component (Wargner, 2014). Novice second-career teachers have the advantage of having contextual content experience. This experience helps them provide a more realistic type of instruction because they are able to bring to the classroom examples and activities that come from their own practice (Tighelaar, 2012).

Chamber (2002) posits that second-career teachers enrich the content of their teaching by supporting it with their previous career experience, although they need other types of support such as pedagogical knowledge to address difficult learning situations. Moreover, Varadharajan (2014) explains that the lack of pedagogical knowledge and learning strategies to address difficult situations is overcome when teachers receive mentorship. When second-career teachers have a web of support they can balance the pedagogy with the subject content resulting in an effective performance.
The Novice Second-Career Teacher as an Adult Learner

The novice second-career teacher is an adult that continues his or her learning process. Adult learning theories provide insight on novice second-career teachers’ learning process, their actions, and expectations. Brookfield (1995) explains that there are some myths around adult learning. He mentions that: (a) adult learning is fundamentally joyful; (b) adults are naturally self-directed learners, and (c) there are exclusive adult learning processes and practices. Kerka (2002) adds that adult learning experiences focus on the learner and building relationships. Andragogy is a collaborative learning method where the learner feels heard and valued.

The adult learner is motivated by personal growth (Taylor, Marienau, & Morris, 2000). Therefore, adult education is a tool for changing the way adults perceive their reality. This could be done through the reframing of experiences by giving lived-experiences another meaning as they acquire new knowledge. This is the case for second-career teachers. When they enter the teaching field coming from a previous career, they can give a different meaning to the experiences they had in their previous career.

Tennant (1993) states adult learning experiences involve a critical reflection of assumptions. This idea is supported by Brookfield (1995) when he explains that critical reflection is when the adult gives meaning to and redefines past experiences. The ability to engage in these processes makes adult learning unique. Although children also have experiences that informed their learning, these will never be comparable to adult learning experiences, due to their age and developmental stage.

Fenwick (2003) emphasizes experience as an important component for learning. The experiences that adults bring to the classroom change the environment into a setting where learning from one another is possible, and where the diversity of thinking is a given. This
diversity of thinking challenges the educator to guide adults “… in a way that enhances their capability to function as self-directed learners.” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 21). Furthermore, this exchange of learning motivates second-career teachers’ eagerness to learn and allows them to start looking for ways to design their own learning experience.

Self-directed learning is a structured strategy, that supports Brookfield’s (1984) statement of education becoming more personal and allowing people to take control over their own learning. Cafarella (1993) adds that when adults are engaged in self-directed learning with a critical perspective they have the tools for social change. Garrison (1997) found that the ability to think critically and to become a self-directed learner can be developed regardless of the competencies of the adult who engages in it. Edmondson, Boyer, and Artis (2012) point out that people that show high levels of self-directed learning also show high levels of academic performance, future aspirations, creativity, curiosity, and life satisfaction. Also, Daily and Landis (2014) explain how self-directed learning helps adults “develop an attitude of humility” (p. 4) which will make the learner aware of what he or she knows to be able to identify all that he or she needs to learn. Therefore, second-career teachers that have developed the habit of looking for ways to self-direct their learning would be more likely to have success in teaching.

Another important aspect of an adult’s learning is the reflection that leads to transformation. Dewey (1938) explained how learners make meaning of the experiences by interpreting, thinking, doubting, questioning, changing events, and circumstances. For second-career teachers, in particular, the reflection is a key component of their learning because it enhances their ability to embrace the new challenge of teaching. Brookfield (2001) states that through this analysis process, adults must dare to question the status quo to develop self-confidence. Then they will experience greater human awareness, as Poutiatine (2009) expressed,
that allows them to transform not only previous knowledge but all aspects of their individual and organizational lives.

**Transformational Learning**

When talking about adults, one of the most important features to mention is the depth of thinking. This way of thinking aligns with the transformational perspective. Robertson (1996) states that transformative learning triggers a change in the individual’s paradigm, which leads to developing new ideas. Mezirow (1997) stated that through transformative learning, adults change their frames of reference. Mezirow also describes these frames of reference as the lenses that we use to see and understand experiences. He later adds that in adulthood, learning happens when people use a prior interpretation to “construct a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience to guide future action” (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162).

Consequently, transformational learning is not only the adult learner’s task. Taylor (2000) explains that transformational learning involves the facilitator and learner. Thus, even when the transformation is achieved by the learner, the facilitator plays an important role in the design of such learning experiences, which will later lead to transformation.

**Chapter II Closure**

This study seeks to understand how Dominican novice second-career teachers make meaning of their transition process into the teaching career. The literature supports that notion that transition is a process that could be understood as a three-stage process: ending, neutral zone, and beginning (Bridges, 2009) with four needed ingredients to be able to overcome it: self, situation, support, and strategies (Schlossberg, 2010). This transition process and outcome will vary according to each person’s circumstances.
Although circumstances differ among individuals, it is possible to say that there are some common aspects in terms of challenges faced by all novice teachers, both first-year teachers, and second-career teachers. These challenges can be summarized in four categories. The first is personal challenges. The other three categories are professional - curriculum, instruction, and assessment; relationships; and unsupportive environments. Each of them has a significant effect on teachers’ success during their first year.

Since novice second-career teachers are adults in a continuous learning process, adult learning theories explain the path these professionals take to become teachers as they embrace their new role and move toward transformation. Chapter 3 offers a detailed explanation of the process I will use to understand how Dominican novice second-career teachers make meaning of their transition process into the teaching career.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this multiple case study is to understand the transition process that second-career professionals undergo when changing to a teaching career. This study aimed to identify how a sample of novice Dominican K-5 second-career teachers describe their first-year teaching experience and make meaning of the transition process that it entails. This chapter will start with an explanation of a significant experience that I had during a field test of the proposal; it is included here because the findings from this experience framed the actual research. I will also explain the research design and approach selected to develop this study.

Pilot Study

To test part of my study’s instruments for data collection, I had the privilege to interview a second-career teacher, experiencing her first year as an Elementary School art teacher. I also had the opportunity to observe her work and the way she developed into becoming a teacher. This pilot study allowed me to test the interview protocol that I had designed, as well as the observation instrument I had chosen.

After analyzing the interview with this second-career teacher, the idea of moving from the comfort of knowing to the unknown was in my head and I thought about it as similar to a little bird hatching from an egg. The birds’ comfort place is the egg because he has been there for a long time; he knows what to expect from it. But knowing and feeling comfortable does not hold the bird back from hatching, he is also eager to see what the outside has for him. This is the same impression I got from this teacher after analyzing the interview and observation data; I thought about this second-career professional’s journey as that bird happily hatching to the unknown.
Thus, I decided to represent these findings using a drawing to better synthesize my findings, like Clark (2014) recommends in Glesne (2016).

Figure 2. Data Representation of a Second-Career Professional’s Teaching Journey

The drawing in *Figure 2*, represents the journey of a second-career teacher. The egg is the first career knowledge, where she feels comfortable. She goes to the teaching career moved by a personal decision and she believes she will do amazing things. The lighting and the colorful storm represent the reality of the struggle, while teaching provokes gratifying feelings, the lack of pedagogical knowledge makes the teacher fight in a storm. It is a storm because it is scary and hard to go through, but it is colorful because even the struggle brings joy at the end. Touching children’s lives and seeing their growth at the end of the year makes the whole storm worth it.
This drawing represents my interpretation of the findings. To be sure that I was grasping the correct ideas, I decided to have it member checked by the participant. I also thought about showing it to the participant because she happened to be an art teacher. I explained the drawing and what it represented without saying that it was all about her. As I explained every part of it and the other parts that I could not put on the paper because I did not know how to, her eyes got watery and she said, “This is me!” to what I replied: “And every other teacher in your same circumstances.”

And this is exactly what this study was about. This study was about those teachers coming from a non-pedagogical career diving into the teaching storm. The ones that were guided, the ones that entered alone, the ones that knew what to expect, and the ones that learned on the road. This study aimed to tell stories; stories that will help understand the journey of a population that is growing in the schools of the Dominican Republic.

As I see it, the drawing provides an answer to two of the research questions: (a) How do second-career professionals describe their transition into the teaching field? And (b) How do second-career professionals make meaning of the transition process they experience? It describes it as a struggle, that although scary and difficult, it is also gratifying. The way people make meaning of it is by satisfying their emotional needs of giving and touching other people’s lives.

This field test study with this teacher influenced the design I proposed for the final study. Through our conversations and her journey during a school year, I understood that a month or two was not enough time for people to realize the meaning, and the depth of the process of transition they are undergoing. They might not even see it as a path leading through a transformation. After this field test, I decided that the study needed to consider different
moments of a teacher’s first year and should include moments in which the teacher could be purposefully engaged in the reflection of their performance.

Research Design, Approach, and Rationale

This study was conducted using a qualitative research approach. This study was qualitative because the data was based on the personal experiences of a small group of participants with rich information to provide. This study sought to examine how a group of second-career teachers describe their first few years of teaching and how they make meaning of the transition process that it entails.

I used a case study approach, which according to Creswell (2014), can be used to develop an in-depth analysis of programs or events of one or more individuals. In this case, I analyzed the experience of becoming teachers of second-career professionals through a multiple case study. Yin (2018) recommends multiple cases because they provide richer information and allow a robust synthesis and analysis of the findings. Moreover, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) suggest that the diversity of participants or cases that are examined contribute to increasing the understanding of this issue.

Patton (2002) explains that qualitative research is emergent in nature because is the inquiry process that guides the study. Taking this statement into consideration, I allowed myself the flexibility to go deep into the study by exploring emergent issues, even after the data collection methods are designed. Creswell (2013) posits that in qualitative research the interaction with participants can lead the researcher to shift the proposed plan to access information that better informs the study.
Reflections on My Identity

I am an early childhood educator working as a literacy coach in a private school in the Dominican Republic. I work along with teachers to improve their instructional performance. With more than ten years of teaching experience and two years in the literacy coach position, I have identified common concerns and instructional patterns in second-career teachers that interest me. I have seen how their performance varies with their preparation; this diversity is reflected in their ability to teach. My motivation to conduct this research is the fact that I have not been able to develop a generalizable set of reasons that can explain such diverse outcomes, and this would be helpful to me as I have understood that each teacher is different and has his idiosyncrasies.

Moreover, although I have been engaged with the topic of second-career teachers’ characteristics for a considerable amount of time, it was the new regulations for second-career teachers in the Dominican Republic that triggered my thirst for knowledge in this regard. For many years, second-career teachers were hired for simply having the needed content knowledge; however, the new regulations state that second-career teachers must have certification to be in the classrooms. Government authorities have created a certification program for these teachers. Thus, second-career teachers who are currently in Dominican classrooms are either already certified or in the process of becoming certified. Despite this regulation, I have not noticed any changes or remarkable differences between the second-career teachers that we used to have in the classrooms and the ones that we have now.

Throughout the study, I used constant bracketing before, during, and after data collection. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), bracketing allows identifying when my assumptions
are interfering with the data being collected and the lived experiences of second-career teachers that were part of this study.

**Population, Sample, and/or Setting**

The population for this study was second-career teachers working in a K-5 school in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The educational system in the Dominican Republic is organized by regions, which are subdivided into the district. The district of Santo Domingo includes more than 5,212 schools classified by public and private institutions in rural and urban settings. For this study, I recruited practicing teachers who: (a) worked in a non-teaching career before getting a teaching position and (b) are older than 21 years of age; (c) had at least 2 years of experience in their first-career; (d) have no more than 18 months of teaching experience in a K-5 school; (e) work either in a private or public school.

A purposeful sampling strategy allowed me to work with teachers who are willing to share their experiences as they transition from a non-teaching career to a teaching career. For this study, I needed at least four participants. Therefore, I was going to be recruiting until I had enough participants to anticipate potential participant loss over the course of the study. Nevertheless, the interested people once learning the requirements of the study, found it time-consuming and ended up deciding not to participate. This inconvenience led me to start and complete the study with only three participants.

**Access and Recruitment**

At the beginning of this study, to recruit the second-career practicing teachers I proposed the following: (a) to ask for the appropriate consent to visit three classes in different universities that offer the certification program and, once there, I would explain the research to the students of those classes and provide my contact information for them to reach me if interested and also
asked for their content information; (b) I would visit two schools from each educational district to explain my research and provided my contact information for them to reach me if interested and also ask for their contact information; (c) I would contact each interested person to schedule an appointment to explain in detail the study and make sure that they were interested in participating; (d) I was going to recruit people until I reached at least 6 second-career teachers that meet the inclusionary criteria and were willing to commit to participating in the study.

I obtained six potential participants who decided not to participate after learning about the study and its expectations. I then reached out to a subject that participated in a field study before this research study. I started a chain sampling, where I gathered three participants who agreed to commit to the study. Although I proposed four participants for this study, the interested people once learning the requirements of the study found it time-consuming and ended up deciding not to participate. This inconvenience led me to start and complete the study with only three participants.

Each participant was treated as an individual case for this multiple case study. Then, I invited the three participants to review the Informed Consent for the study (see Appendix A). They chose to receive it by e-mail prior to signing it. They had two to three weeks to review it and decided to sign it, agreeing to participate.

**Data Source**

First, I asked the participants to start a reflective journal to record their experiences teaching, their path through making meaning of what they are living, and their discoveries in their new practice. As a reflective tool, journals can document narratives of significant moments lived by participants at any point in time (Bashan and Holsblat, 2017).
Second, I developed a semi-structured interview guide with twelve questions (see Appendix B). I used this guide to promote the dialogue during the interview, and direct second-career teachers to talk about their experiences (Harrell and Bradley, 2009). Even when I used a guide, I also used the probing type of questions to delve deeper into elements of interest to this study that emerged during the interview.

Third, I used a reflection guide after each interview to help me capture my thoughts on the interview. This reflection guide was taken from Scott (2009) (see Appendix D). I used this tool to avoid bias and ensure objectivity. This is a recommended tool to be used in qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Fourth, I developed an observation protocol. I used this document for class observations to identify if certain elements that came up during the interview were also visible in the participants’ teaching experience. This document was created after having interviewed the teacher to get a better insight on what might occur in the observation.

Fifth, I prompted the teacher’s reflection stimulated by a previously videotaped lesson. To be specific, teachers videotaped themselves teaching a lesson, or a portion of it, and then, the participant and I would watch this video together as we reflected upon the practice observed in the video. This type of interview is called a stimulated recall interview (Sali and Kecik, 2018). I developed a stimulated recall interview guide based on the analysis of previous interviews and observation documents.

Sixth, I developed a document review guide based on an initial analysis of previous interviews O’Leary, Z. (2014). I used this guide to understand the documents or artifacts participants shared with me to illustrate their experiences of becoming a teacher. I used this
guide to analyze participants’ reflective journals. This tool helped me identify central and common ideas among participants’ journals.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Since all the second-career teacher participants of the study had less than 18 months of teaching experience, I was able to engage with them as they began their journey of becoming a teacher. Therefore, I asked participants to start a reflective journal the day that they agreed to participate in the research study. In this journal, I asked participants to record their experiences teaching, their path through making meaning of what they were living, and their discoveries in their new practice (Ortlipp, 2008). I encouraged them to make several entries a week in the journal, and to use their preferred way of expression, words, drawings, voice recording, etc.

Second, I conducted a semi-structured interview with the participants. I audio-recorded each interview. In this interview, we talked about their experiences with transitioning to the teaching field and their first year as practicing teachers who are still in the process of becoming experienced teachers. Even when I was using the interview guide, I was also using probes, as follow-up questions to their initial answers when needed (Merriam, 1998). During the interview, I invited participants to share any documents or artifacts they thought could illustrate "the footprints of their journey" to become a teacher. I transcribed the interviews and I gave it to the participants to review and add any detail that they would have had missed or would like to expand on.

Third, I asked each participant to invite me to observe a regular teaching day in their classroom. In this observation, I was expecting to see how some of the aspects that came up during the interview were visible in the teacher’s classroom reality. These observations allowed me to identify “coding schemes” (Marshal and Rosman, p. 144) to be able to capture richer
information that contributed to answering the research questions. Thus, the instrument that
guided these observations was created after the interviews.

Fourth, I asked participants to select a subject or grade (depending on the level of the
teacher) in which they felt more comfortable teaching. I asked them to videotape their
performance in the selected area during three different moments of the school year. Next, I asked
them to use these videos to prompt reflections about their performance in a stimulated recall type
of interview (Sali and Kecik, 2018).

Fifth, I analyzed participants’ reflective journals that they started at the beginning of the
study. The process that I used to analyze these journals helped me support the information
gathered through interviewing and observation (Yin, 2018), as well as to identify similarities and
common traits in each of them.

It is important to mention that this study was conducted in the Dominican Republic with
Spanish speaking participants, since Spanish is the participants’ native language, every
interaction with them was in Spanish.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I followed the seven phases of analytic procedures suggested by
Marshall and Rossman (2011). The first step was to organize the data using a log of data as
suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2011). The organization scheme that I used was listing the
different data that I collected. I organized each type of data by dates of collection and transcribed
interviews as they occur. For the organization of the data, I used a chart with the columns: date,
place, activity, who, and what.

The second step was to immerse me in the data anticipating that it was of a significant
volume. Patton (2002) suggests immersion as the most helpful way to make sense of the
complexity of the information. This helped me to be fully aware of the descriptive information that I was getting. It also helped me to identify possible emerging categories and themes. This immersion required a process of reading, rereading, and becoming very familiar with the information that I gathered.

The third step was to apply a coding process to isolate the salient points in the data. These points were captured within vivo codes to retain the natural language of participants (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). These codes emerged from the data, thus, as I identified them, I recorded them on a chart.

The fourth step was to generate analytic memos from my experience with the data. In these memos, I recorded my thoughts on how the data collected come together and started making sense (Rogers, 2018). The fifth step was to revise coding categories until they crystallized around a set of themes and sub-themes that helped me develop a summary of each case and a cross-case analysis, considering the way they answered the research questions (Marshall and Rossman, 2011).

The last step was to look for different ways to understand the data to challenge my own interpretation and develop the problem understanding to write the final presentation of study findings. This final writing included the specifics of the information gathered from the data collected. It also included the themes selected, the categories found, along with the case summaries that provided thick, rich descriptions that supported the final themes and sub-themes (Glesne, 2005). I repeated the process for each data source for each participant. After analyzing each data source for a participant, I cross-analyzed the yield from each data source to isolate the thematic elements that created a picture of the essence of that person’s experience. I utilized a case description to portray the essence of each participant’s experience, using the thematic
Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1986), trustworthiness in a study can be established by addressing: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I used the following methods to establish trustworthiness:

1) Triangulation of data. This addresses the credibility and confirmability. I used the information obtained in the interviews, in the observations, and the journal analysis. I coded them separately and then I identified if there were similarities within them. I made sure to analyze and compare the data collected from interview transcripts, observation documents, and journal reflection to have sufficient sources that confirm the findings as suggested by Knafl and Breitmayer (1989).

2) Member checking. It also addresses credibility and Krefting (1991) suggest that researchers share with the participants the data taken after an interview for the participants to have the opportunity to discuss, clarify, and add to the interpretation. This provides a fair perspective of the participant’s experience and each one has an opportunity to bear out the information provided. In this sense, I transcribed my interviews and personally deliver the transcripts to the participants. I asked them to read it and confirm or add on any information they believed should be there.
3) Thick description. This addresses external validity establishing transferability. I made sure to describe in detail the environment and the participants that were part of the study. I worked on my description, so I could provide rich information on the context, social relationships, and environment.

4) Reflexivity. This strategy addresses confirmability. Creswell (2013) describes reflexivity as the activity of making yourself aware of the values, biases, and experiences that as a researcher you put into your study. Therefore, I made sure to write my reflexivity statement in which I explained my background, beliefs, and preconceptions that could have driven me to develop the research. Malterud (2001) highlights the importance of reflexivity by stating that a researcher’s preconceptions can bias the research if he does not make sure to state his position in the writing, moreover, she refers to reflexivity as “the knower's mirror” (p. 23). This mirror could also be understood as the bracketing process that, according to Tufford and Newman (2010) is a process that helps mitigate the effects of the researcher’s preconceptions that may affect the research process. They also explain that bracketing is recommended to avoid affecting the reliability of the study.

Limitations and Delimitations

One of the limitations of this study was the fact that the majority of second-career teachers were in private schools, and the reality of private and public schools are significantly different in the Dominican Republic. Teachers in private schools tend to receive more support than teachers in public schools; this reality can impact each teacher’s journey. Also, another limitation was that since the Ministry was undertaking a strong campaign seeking strong teachers for Maths and
Science at the time of the study, the number of second-career teachers in the Dominican public schools had increased, but they were mostly teaching in high school grades.

A delimitation for this study was that the selected second-career teachers needed to have less than 18 months of teaching experience. This criterion ensured that the second-career professionals were novice teachers and were in the early phase of their journey into becoming teachers.

**Chapter III Closure**

This study is a multiple case study of the transition process that second-career professionals undergo when changing to the teaching career. I used interviews with second-career teachers, observations of their job environment, and performance to provide an in-depth description of these professionals. I supported the description with a journal analysis of the lived experiences of these participants. I analyzed data using member checking, bracketing, and triangulation. I reported the findings describing how a group of Dominican second-career teachers in K-5 classrooms describe and make meaning of their first-year teaching experience and the transition process that it entails.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents data collected on the development of three novice second-career teachers in different grade levels and areas of teaching. Before their careers in teaching, these three participants had at least two years of experience in jobs related to their previous careers. At the start of this research study, each of these teachers had had a minimum of six months formally working as a teacher. This study examined how this group of Dominican second-career teachers in K-5 classrooms described and made meaning of their first year’s teaching experience and the transition process that it entails. This study took approximately 12 months from the initial contact with participants to the final conversations. This chapter presents a description of the process through which I contacted participants. It also shows a portrayal of each of the participants and the information provided from the different sources of data. It covers the narratives of the participants’ experiences collected through interviews, class observations, video stimulated recalled interviews, and journaling. Finally, I provide a cross-case comparison of the data.

The Research Process

To recruit participants for this research, I first reached out to universities that offered a certification program. I obtained six potential participants who decided not to participate after learning about the study and its expectations. I then reached out to a subject that participated in a field study before this research study. I started a chain sampling, where I gathered three participants who agreed to commit to the study. Although I proposed four participants for this study, the interested people once learning the requirements of the study found it time-consuming
and ended up deciding not to participate. This inconvenience led me to start and complete the study with only three participants.

Once I identified the participants and received HSIRB approval, I scheduled a semi-structured interview (Appendix B) with each participant to collect first-hand information about their background and the way they entered the teaching career. In this meeting, the participants were also asked to start keeping a journal in which they would write any experience or thoughts they had as teachers during the span of the research. These journal entries would be a component of the whole picture of their journey from the school year that was just starting.

I explained during this interview, that as part of the research, we would have a Stimulated Recall Interview (SRI). Each participant would choose a lesson or a portion of the lesson and video record themselves. They would then share that video with me for us to discuss different aspects of their performance. Since the purpose of the interview was for them to be able to look closely at different parts of their journey as teachers and for me to document the process, not to assess their teaching performance, I emphasized that they could choose any class or moment that made them feel more comfortable, for example a class that they have taught before or a group of students that were smaller than a regular class.

We held two SRIs during the school year. One during the first semester, beginning in December, right after the first interview, and another one at the end of the second semester, around late May - early June. During these meetings, we first watched the video and then discussed different aspects of their teaching (Appendix D). The last data source stemmed from classroom observation. The purpose of this observation was to note the integration of their words, thoughts, and reflections in the actual act of teaching. These observations took place during the last weeks of school.
To organize the data collected in the study in a chronological manner, I divided the school year into three parts: beginning of school year (Sept.-Dec.); middle of school year (Jan.-Apr.); and end of school year (May-Jun.). Table 1 shows when each data was collected from each teacher.

Table 1.
Timeline of the Data Collected from Each Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of data</th>
<th>Semi structured interview</th>
<th>SRI 1</th>
<th>SRI 2</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bubbles</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>M, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blossom</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>M, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buttercup</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>M, E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B= Beginning of School Year  M= Middle of School Year  E= End of School Year

For the analysis of the data collected, I used the seven phases of analytic procedures suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2011), as I explained in chapter 3. I had a second reviewer for the coding scheme.

Participants of the Study

The three subjects that participated in this study were not part of any certification program previously contacted, but they met the following criteria: (a) worked in a non-teaching career before getting a teaching position and (b) were male or female, age 21 or older; (c) had a previous career that was not in teaching; (d) had at least 2 years of experience in their first-
career; (e) had no more than 18 months of teaching experience in a K-5 school at the time of research; and (f) worked either in a private or public school.

Table 2 shows a summary of the participants’ background information. These teachers were assigned to different grade levels in Elementary school. One of the three teachers worked in a public school and the other two are private school teachers. To preserve the participants’ confidentiality, each teacher has been assigned a pseudonym. This pseudonym was based on the superhero cartoon The Powderpuff Girls because those three girls fight to make difference in the world with unusual tools, just like these teachers.

Table 2

Participants Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Prior Career</th>
<th>1st Career</th>
<th>Time Teaching When Research Started</th>
<th>Subject/ Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bubbles</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Music/Pk-2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blossom</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>Reading and Writing/3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buttercup</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>14 months</td>
<td>Math/2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>STEAM/4th-6th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bubbles**

Bubbles started her professional path as a pharmacist because she had a love for biology. She has an undergraduate degree in pharmacy. She always had in the back of her mind that she
wanted to study medicine. She thought that as a pharmacist she could start familiarizing herself with different illnesses and their treatments. During those years, she acquired relevant knowledge and skills for becoming a doctor. Therefore, her pharmacist career was not intended to be her permanent career.

**Interview data.** Bubbles is Dominican from birth; however, she has lived in the United States for most of her life. During her school years, she had received education in music, been part of the school band, and had formal instruction as a pianist. A family health issue brought them back to the DR; the migration and teaching experience of some family members opened an unexpected path for Bubbles. Bubbles started to work in a private school as an administrative assistant providing little assistance with instruction due to the need for administrative support. Later on, the school had an opening for a Music teacher position. Her previous exposure to music inspired her. She applied for the position and ended up receiving the opportunity to be the Music teacher for Early Education and the Elementary schools.

Bubbles took the music knowledge she gained during her school years and became a music teacher. She dealt with this first teaching experience by mimicking her learning experiences as a music student and also by doing sufficient research. She read about the effects of music on young children, what happens to their brain and how it supports the language development of students. Bubbles found this aspect of music particularly interesting for teaching English. At her international school, most subjects were taught in English but almost 98% of the students and teachers were native Spanish speakers. This fact helped her see music teaching from a different perspective. For her, it was not only about singing and dancing at the beat but also about the scientific process behind it. Music had always been important for her, but now the approach was to teach it to others in a meaningful way that could help them retain, develop, and
reproduce it. She used visual aids, hand signals, and every other thing that she found that could support the learning of her students, especially the little ones.

During her first day of class, she felt very nervous. She used information provided by her superiors during teacher preparation days. She had planned a structure for her class, based on a lesson plan template she received from the school principal. She had planned the objectives for her class, the schedule and class expectations, however, she was not certain how her first day would unfold. Her mother, a retired teacher and leader in the educational field, gave her tips to have a smooth first day, emphasizing the importance of setting up classroom procedures and having proper group management from day one if she was planning to get students to learn anything. Thus, she carefully planned out the first lesson with several activities, leaving very little room for unplanned moments. She even planned tasks for the teacher aides. She ended up with what she considered a perfect lesson plan.

Bubbles’ first class was with a second-grade group and it started with a greeting. She introduced herself and proceeded to explain the format for each music class. First, she will come and meet the students on the rug; then, they will sing a song and learn something specific that day; after that, they will do an activity that could be in groups or independent. She gathered the group for an introduction using the song “Who took the cookie from the cookie jar” in which they had to say their names. They would go back and forth to each kid and it was a call and response song. She also used the song as an introduction to the call and response concept which was a teaching objective for the music curriculum. With that song she got them settled down and started to explain a little about call and response.

Bubbles explained that during that first day of school she did not experience behavior issues. She noted her students were extremely talkative, and she assumed it was because they had
spent a long time without seeing each other, therefore, she did not pay much attention to the behavior. Later during the school year, other more significant behavioral issues arose. In this second grade, she specifically remembers a situation where she had to evacuate the classroom because a student was being violently disruptive, and she saw a potential danger to other students. Bubbles said that this situation made her feel uncomfortable especially because she was not sure of what to do. She knew that she was not supposed to touch the child, but she explained that she just acted by impulse to keep the other students safe not because she had a protocol to follow. As far as she remembers, that was the situation that had the greatest impact on her teaching career because she was frightened, but also in charge of keeping 20 other people safe.

The teaching experience for Bubbles was described as a positive one which provided her with skills that she will use in all areas of her life. It also gave a different meaning to her life because she started to develop connections on different levels with students to have them progress in their learning. For Bubbles, being a novice teacher is being constantly afraid of failing to meet the school’s expectations, but most of all failing to meet the expectations of the students who count on her. She realized that it takes a few months for the teacher to understand each child’s situation and connect on an emotional level to get academic results.

Bubbles embraces the teaching experience as a challenge and learns as much as possible. She believes that her novice experience has been smoother due to the support she has received from her family, and her supervisors. Nevertheless, she had several moments of uncertainty and apprehension.

**Stimulated Recalled Interviews (SRI) Data.** For the first SRI, in early December, Bubbles recorded a lesson with a second-grade class. In this video, the teacher was sitting in the meeting area with all students. She was going to teach them the place of notes in the pentagram.
It was a 10-minute video in which you could hear the voices of the students were louder than the teacher’s voice. The video recording was abruptly stopped.

Bubbles explained that she felt frustrated because she was not able to deliver the lesson due to students’ who did not stop talking. This made her feel that they did not care about the class. Then, she explained that with this particular group she always felt challenged because of the excessive talking and disrespect. She has asked the homeroom teacher for strategies that worked for her during regular classes, but Bubbles did not consider the teacher’s answers helpful. The homeroom teacher suggested that the problem is that Bubbles’ class lacks structure and a plan for classroom management rather than the group’s behavior issues.

During this first SRI, Bubbles reflected that she might need to provide students with more manipulatives. She said that seeing that they were so engaged in talking, she should consider giving them class content to talk about with each other. She also considered that since the homeroom teacher implied that the students’ behavior was positive in her class, Bubbles will visit the homeroom teacher’s class to learn management strategies that work for the group.

Bubbles shared that since she had thoughtful lesson plans and fun activities that had worked with other classes, the lesson should have gone better. With this group nevertheless, she acknowledged that there are several ways to teach the same thing and there must be one that better fits those students. Bubbles left the first SRI feeling positive about her ability to do more to engage those students.

For the second SRI, during the month of May, Bubbles brought a 20 minutes’ video recording of a second-grade class. In this video, the students were standing up in a circle throwing a ball to each other. As they caught the ball, they were repeating rhythms. Bubbles explained that the purpose of the lesson was for students to be able to repeat rhythmical patterns.
As we watched the video and discussed what we were seeing, Bubbles quickly pointed out that this time the group was engaged in the class. She reflected upon the fact that after several lessons and observing the group in other settings, she had noticed that it was a kinesthetic group, therefore, she decided to start each class with movement instead of a circle meeting. Bubbles also shared that the challenge of the lesson in the video was the detailed planning that went behind it. She explained how coming up with movement activities for a 45-minute class, that related to the objective of the class, took her close to three hours of planning. She had to look for activities online, make up her own, and ask everybody for ideas. Nevertheless, she explained that the result was a rewarding experience. During the SRI she said that after some of the activities, they started talking and getting distracted, luckily it was close to the end of the class.

As a reflection from the second SRI, Bubbles realized that good teaching is engaging in hard work before, during, and after teaching. She also understands how important is to know your students to be able to adequately plan for effective instruction. Bubbles think that being a good teacher entails more than what can be seen during a class observation. She expressed that each day her mother’s words resonated with her, remembering that one needs to have a vocation to teach. This acquired a deeper meaning for her.

**Journal Writing.** Bubbles submitted a journal with four entries. Two in the month of December, one in the month of April, and the last one in the month of June. The entries topics were relationship with peers, students’ performance, and feelings about her teaching profession.

In the first entry, Bubbles narrates a situation she encountered when working with a team of teachers to prepare a Christmas musical for the school. The music teacher for 3rd to 7th grade had prepared an adaptation of a book; Bubbles’ job on the team was to make sure that first and
second-grade students were ready for their presentation with a song and a dance. Bubbles explained that although she got along with that particular teacher when that teacher saw herself under pressure, she began to question why things were not working as expected. She said that Bubbles was not doing her part of the job and had provided her with the wrong songs. Bubbles expressed that the problem was not a big deal for her but the fact that she was being unfairly blamed in front of her supervisors, peers, and students made her feel very uncomfortable. She did not address the issue with the teacher or anyone else after that.

The second entry tells about the last day of school before Christmas break. She said that the play was a success and that parents loved it. She also mentioned she received many presents from her students that made her feel special. The third entry was about the misbehavior of a specific student for whom she had requested support and has not received it from her supervisors or any other person in the team. She felt frustrated that she has not been able to complete any lessons as planned for that class because every week there is something going on with that child.

The fourth and last entry is a reflection of the year. She narrates her feeling of accomplishment when she sees the progress of her students. Although in some groups more than others, she can say that all of the students have learned and grown. She highlighted that she has grown the most.

Class Observation. Upon entering the classroom, the students were observed standing up in rows facing the wall. The teacher was in front of them. On the board, there was a rhythmical pattern of quarter notes and eight notes with students working on. The teacher was explaining to the students that they would do a certain movement with each note. For the quarter notes students will move forward clapping once, for the eight notes the students would move left and right following the beat of a quarter note. The teacher and the students did four different
rhythmical patterns with different movements. Almost all students were doing the movement. There was one girl that did not want to participate because she said she had a pain in her ankle, so the teacher let her sit and observe. The girl then, started doing the rhythmical pattern with her arms without the body movement. There was another boy that was being disruptive as the teacher was explaining but then when they started moving, the boy started to participate as well.

The teacher told the students that she was going to play music and ask them not to pay much attention to the lyrics of the song, but instead, do the same movements they have practiced that would respond to the rhythm of the song. The teacher played a popular song that students started singing. She remained in front of them doing the movements in response to the rhythmical pattern. The students commented among each other that the rhythm was the same as in the song. All children were engaged in the activity. When the song finished, the teacher asked two different students to share any comment related to their observations on the song’s rhythm.

Then, the teacher asked students to choose a quiet position and place in the classroom because they were going to be working independently. They spread out all over the room and she gave them paper and pencil. Then, she explained that she was going to do a rhythmical pattern and that they would have to write it on the paper. She explained that to represent the pattern they would use the figures that she previously showed them on the board. She did several patterns and students wrote them on paper. This activity lasted 5 minutes. After that, the teacher asked students to write their names on the paper and collected all papers. Then, she had them make a circle and started to rehearse a poem that they were going to be presenting during a flag ceremony that week. It seemed that the students already knew the poem and they were agreeing on the gestures that they were going to use.
The teacher wrapped up the lesson by asking students to line up and telling them that next week they were going to continue getting the dance ready.

**Blossom**

Prior to becoming a teacher, Blossom pursued a career in advertising. Once licensed, she got a job in a company where she monitored different sources of advertisements. Blossom started her professional path as an advertising coordinator by chance. When she graduated from the university, she had several unstable jobs before ending up in the advertising company. She started out as a member of the television and radio advertisements team in an American enterprise in the DR. After one year, she became a supervisor and trained employees.

**Interview Data.** Blossom trained new entry-level employees to perform their jobs according to the company’s specifications. She developed important skills during that period, such as listening, interpersonal and language development skills. Nevertheless, she did not feel it was the job she really wanted to do. Although, she worked full-time, she found herself needing more income. Since she spoke English well, she started to give English lessons in the evenings. There she met a friend who recommended her for a formal job as a teacher.

She went to an interview in a private school that was seeking for an Elementary teacher who could speak English for the bilingual program. She did not have a certification in teaching nor pedagogical knowledge. Due to her experience from the few months that she had teaching adults in the evening and her willingness to try it, the school decided to give her an opportunity. The interview happened a few months before the end of the school year. Since she had her minimal teaching experience, she was asked to come to the school a few days a week to receive in-classroom training with the current teacher. She agreed to it, visiting the school every Friday.
until that year was over. The next school year, she was placed as a third-grade reading and writing teacher.

Blossom started teaching a third-grade group with no specific teaching knowledge and some experience teaching in informal settings. As a trainer, she had to teach others, therefore, she took those skills from her advertisement experience and brought them into her teaching. She started teaching with the idea of finding ways to connect with the students as she did with the adults that she had to train. She made sure that she used technology in some way because she learned that technological tools worked very well with young adults, therefore, her lesson plans would always have a video, a short online game, or an activity to engage students.

Blossom explained that her first day of school was hectic. She was very nervous and had some expectations that were not met at the end of the day. She felt confident about the theory she had read about establishing routines, getting to know every student, and being firm but having to live the theory was a different thing for Blossom. She explained that she felt overwhelmed during the first week because she felt that the children were not understanding her or even listening to her. She recalled that on previous occasions she was able to establish very positive relationships with her adult students at the very beginning. As she thinks back into those first days of school, she remembers how she had had to work to gain the affection of the students and to build an environment of respect and security for all.

One of the most significant experiences that she can recall from her first days is a situation she had with a frustrated student that got physical and became disruptive. She started to identify the things and events that could get him frustrated and the physical signs he gave when starting to feel uncomfortable. Thus, once she saw a specific face or reaction, she would invite the student out and quickly take him to a mini gym that the school had where he was safe to hit
any material without hurting himself and was able to release his anger. Blossom came up with this strategy because she figured out what the child needed when he was frustrated was something to hit, so she gave it to him.

When talking about teaching, Blossom describes it as her passion. She explained that being a novice teacher is hard, that there are many tough moments, but she sees teaching as her vocation. She is certain that not everybody is cut out to be a teacher because of the ever-present difficult moments. She shares that teachers have to face challenging situations with patience and wisdom. Thus, for Blossom, teaching is like living on a constant roller-coaster. As for being a novice teacher, Blossom sees it as making mistakes and learning from them, researching, observing, asking for help, and understanding that teaching takes practice and soul.

**Stimulated Recalled Interviews (SRI) Data.** The first SRI with Blossom was mid-December. Before watching the video, Blossom explained that we were going to watch the independent time during the readers’ workshop. She then played a 10 minutes’ video that showed a very loud environment. The students were running around the classroom with books on their hands. The teacher was raising her voice asking students to remain seated. Blossom explained, that even though it seems like chaos, it was not. She said that she had recently read a book about how procedures and routines take time to be established and that she believed that was what happened at that moment. Her intention was for everybody to choose a place to read, not for anyone to start reading quietly. She continued by saying that she could not ask students for more at that point in time because they were still learning, and the adjustments would take time. Blossom felt that the students were meeting her expectations and felt that she accomplished her goal. She expressed that she thought that a reasonable time for the students to be able to adjust to the new routine she was establishing was about a month.
Blossom explained that a challenge that she faced during this lesson was to explain to students what they were supposed to do, a part that is not shown in the video. She said that she gathered them in a circle and told them that they were going to try something new, reading independently for a sustained period. As she explained her expectations, she narrated that several students kept chatting with each other, and most of those were the same ones that later on in the video, were not able to find a seat and stay still.

When reflecting on how this lesson was different from other lessons taught at the beginning of the school year, Blossom said that she had invested a significant amount of time planning this lesson, something that she was not able to do frequently because of her other duties as a teacher. She expressed that, at the beginning of the school year, she spent a lot of time grading papers, checking notebooks, and writing emails. When it came to lesson planning, she never had the time to deliver those in a timely manner. When the supervisors saw her struggling, they immediately paired her up with a coach from the school who supported her in the planning and preparation area. As she improved her delivery of instruction, she felt more secure to try new things such as independent reading time. Blossom’s next goal is to see a quiet independent reading time that allows her to work in small groups with other students. As a reflection from that first SRI, she said that she must raise her expectations because it seemed that students behaved at the level of her expectations.

The second SRI with Blossom was during the second week of May. When asked about the recording that she was going to present, Blossom introduced it as “the result of a lot of tears”. She then showed a 10-minute video where she appeared on the rug with a group of four students. The other students were in what looked like an independent reading time. The students that were not with the teacher were moving around the classroom. Four of them kept coming and
going to the teacher to ask questions. It was difficult to understand what the students said, but Blossom redirected them to their assignment each time they went to her.

Blossom started the conversation about this video by recalling the first SRI when she was starting to establish the independent reading time. She said that, when she saw the video now, she was expecting it to look a little bit different because improving independent reading time consumed a lot of her time. She said that for this point in time she expected of students being able to work on their own without needing much guidance. Although some of the students were able to work independently, others interrupted her during the intervention time which lowered the quality of her small group time. Blossom elaborated on how much of her teaching time was consumed in trial and error with this independent time and her students. And now that the school year is almost over, she has little or no data on the students’ progress in terms of reading. She explained that she was also receiving complaints from the parents because they were not seeing any progress.

Blossom reflected on the fact that she might have spent too much time teaching procedures to her students. She was a firm believer that this independent time was going to allow her to address her students’ needs in a differentiated way, but this procedural work ended up consuming all of her teaching time. She confessed that she was very anxious because she now had less than a month of school and she was not sure if her students were ready for the next grade.

**Journal Writing.** Blossom submitted a journal with four entries. These entries were not dated. Two of the entries tell a story of challenging beginning days and the other two, tells the story of an unexpected ending. In the first entry, Blossom talks about her struggles with motivation. She describes how she does not feel motivated to work because she feels is too much
for her. She has four teaching periods a day, a 45-minute planning period where she was expected to plan, grade papers, communicate with parents, prepare charts and materials for the class, and a 45-minute period for lunch that she also uses to complete her work. The second entry conveys the same idea of struggling to cope with deadlines and duties and her frustration and discouragement not in dealing with the children but in accomplishing all the requirements. In those two entries, she added that she takes work home every day with the hope of being done at some point, but she feels that the work never ends. As she prepared for all the things that need to be done, she fears she will break down.

The third entry in Blossom’s journal is a flashback from the beginning days of the school year when teachers were in training. She said that during that time she was full of energy, she never missed a workshop and gave her full attention to everything, taking notes and making sure everything was clear to her. She remembered that energy because she felt that she needed it when she wrote the post. She said that at that time she wanted to learn everything about her students. She reflected that teaching was still her passion and that she quit her other jobs so she could excel in this one, but at that point it time she needed a constant reminder of those energetic and passionate days because she was feeling overwhelmed.

The last entry on Blossom’s journal is a reflection of the end of the school year. She expressed that although she experienced frustration, discouragement, lack of motivation, and sadness, she always had someone by her side supporting her. She said that she had supervisors, teacher friends, and even strangers there for her in moments of crisis. She ended her journal by encouraging new teachers to never give up because even when everything seems to be falling apart, it will all fall where it has to fall.
Class Observation. Upon entering the classroom, the students were resting on their tables, with lights down and soft music as a background. Two minutes later Blossom asked the students to transition quietly to the meeting area. The students started to stand up and sat on the rug facing the teacher. The teacher set an alarm before starting the lesson. Blossom started talking about the characters of a book they were reading called “Because of Winn Dixie”. Then, Blossom asked the students if they have ever felt like one of the book’s characters named Opal, and had students discuss their experiences with their partners as she walked around to hear their thoughts.

After giving the students some time to talk to each other, the teacher called everyone to her and asked them to share what they have discussed with their partners. When several students shared, she continued by asking two more questions and randomly selected students to answer them. Once the question session was over, she proceeds to read aloud what seemed to be the next chapter. At this point, most of the students were attentively listening to the story. Nevertheless, as she kept on going, she slowly started to lose the students’ attention. By the time she was done reading she had called for their attention more than five times and the students were talking loudly and being disruptive.

Buttercup

Before becoming a teacher, he was working in a small office as an engineer. Although it was a formal job, it did not require a full-time schedule, therefore the pay was low. Buttercup explains that in his childhood years he had a special interest in math. Since he was 13 years old he knew that he wanted to study something related to math, that was how he ended up studying engineering. When he got his degree, the only job he could find was in that small office with a
part-time schedule. Due to the unexpected sickness of a close friend, he was asked to consider the possibility of teaching math and science in a private Elementary school.

**Interview Data.** Buttercup agreed to go to an interview, and since the school year had already started, he was offered the position. He had never done teaching before nor thought about it. Nevertheless, he accepted it, mainly because of the financial benefits. He started teaching math in second grade, and STEAM for fourth to sixth grade.

When talking about education and his previous career, Buttercup explains that his career was about building ideas and making things, which he finds similar to the field of education. Buttercup education is about building student’s knowledge about concepts and numbers so they can make things. Although these fields are similar to one and another, education for Buttercup is more significant because of the impact it has on people. Education is complex because it requires you to interact with different worlds and people. Buttercup explains that he has felt that, in a way, he has had to put aside what he is to be able to immerse himself in someone else’s world.

Buttercup explained that he did not know how to teach a class, he was using trial and error. He did start to seek out formal pedagogical preparation. The training he received when he started teaching was too theoretical and not exactly what he felt he needed. Therefore, he learned to teach by teaching, by researching, and by making many mistakes. He expressed that he started teaching how he was taught, and now and then he would find videos with new ideas that he was willing to try. The conversations with his teacher friends enhanced some of his lessons, but in the end, he stated that he learned about teaching from the internet.

During his journey, Buttercup has struggled with putting himself aside to understand others, specifically his students. He has worked hard to not take things personally. He reflects on the fact that some students can have very strong opinions or comments that can be hard on a
teacher, but if you step back and try to see the situation from another perspective you will always find that a challenging behavior, a tough comment, is a response to something else, in most of the cases, not related to teaching or the teacher at all.

Buttercup recalls having some negative experiences, especially with conduct. He remembers a time when a student told him that he did not know what he was doing and that he was not a good enough teacher to be working at that school. That episode touched him personally because, at the time, he was not feeling sure of his pedagogical competence to teach, nevertheless, he was able to overcome the situation when he understood that this student situation was not a teacher-student problem, but more a life problem with the student. At the moment of the encounter, there was not much that he felt he could do, therefore, he just let it pass. Over time, Buttercup started to learn more about this particular student and was able to help him in other ways, beyond just math assistance.

The experience of teaching has been life-changing for Buttercup. He explains that he has met parts of himself that he has never known before. He has discovered that the role of the teacher is not only to plan and teach; being a teacher requires you to become a psychologist, a mother, a military officer, a coach, and a friend. In every person’s life, there is supposed to be someone that fills all these roles, but sometimes, as a teacher, you have to be the person to fill them all for all students. Therefore, when you become a teacher you are accepting a challenge that impacts you not only professionally, but very personally, because you are running many races and you wish to win them all.

Summarizing his experience so far, Buttercup posits that when thinking about being a teacher people cannot consider the money they are getting paid because it is not possible to be paid for all those roles. The work of a teacher has no price and it is not for everyone. It requires
patient, passion, vocation, and love for others. It resembles the job of a pastor and the heart of a good mother.

**Stimulated Recalled Interviews (SRI) Data.** For the first SRI, in early December, Buttercup recorded a lesson with a second-grade class. In this video, the teacher was giving a math lesson in the circle time. The teacher interacted with the students with some difficulty articulating the words properly. The students were participating all at the same time which makes it difficult for the teacher to be heard by the students. The duration of the video was 10 minutes.

Buttercup explained that he felt good about the lesson because he exhibited good time management. He had been working on shortening his explicit teaching, and when he got it down to ten minutes he decided to record the video. He also provided clear and understandable explanations. He said that it seems that his students were having fun because, although they were being loud they were able to follow the class, so he assumed that the conversations they were having with their partners were related to the class.

During this particular lesson, it was challenging to deliver the instruction because they were all talking together. He explained that at the moment he was only focused on teaching, but when he saw the video he realized that he did not have his students’ attention for as long as he thought he did.

Regarding his preparation for this lesson, Buttercup explains that it was a real challenge for him to unpack the content. He explained that he can understand heavy math content and having to focus on the basics to put it in fundamental words that can be understood by second graders was one of the most difficult things he has had to do. Buttercup explained that he has been able to use the math from his previous career in a different way.
Moreover, when reflecting upon the way he teaches math as opposed to the way he learned he admitted feeling overwhelmed. He explained that nowadays, children are given options, different strategies to solve the same problem and that a teacher is expected to be the one that provides the different scenarios for this type of engagement to happen. He reflected that it is a whole different type of learning experience; it is a way to teach possibilities.

Buttercup’s thinking about the lesson he shared was that he still looked like an inexperienced teacher. He pointed out that during the lesson his voice was shaking, he was sweating, and he admitted that having an audience has always made him nervous. At the end of that SRI, he thought that, as a teacher, he was a work in progress and found it helpful to do this type of video reflection.

For the second SRI, during the month of May, Buttercup brought a nine minutes’ video recording of the same second-grade class. In this video, the teacher was giving a math lesson in the meeting area. The teacher was interacting with the students fluently. He asked questions, had students discuss with their partners, and engaged in conversation with students. The students in the video seemed engaged with the lesson.

As we watched the video Buttercup started to compare it with the last one. In this one he explains that he could hear himself talking, he added that it looks like he has more confidence and that the children were paying attention. He highlighted that in this second video the students seem to be enjoying the class because they are actively participating as they talk to their peers about the lesson. He said that he now walks around the students as they share and record their conversations in a sheet that later on helps him make more informed decisions regarding student progress.
Buttercup shared that since he has a mathematical way of seeing things, he developed a data recording sheet. This sheet is used to keep track of the students’ achievements. He writes the objective of the day on the paper and then he goes around and listens to the students’ conversation, asks a short question, and if their performance or answers provide evidence of knowledge of the objective, he marks it on the paper. That way, when the grading time comes, he already has the data of what is mastered and what is not. Buttercup also explained that this helps him to support students in specific ways. He said that the school he works for has a strong philosophy of differentiated instruction, therefore, it is almost mandatory for him to keep a record of that differentiation and the specific needs that are being covered for each student.

Going back to the video, Buttercup reflected that this time the big challenge was planning the lesson. He said that it took him a significant amount of time because he does not know how to improvise, therefore, he prepares three possible scenarios, to do so he requires all of his time on the weekends. In that sense, he shared that this is a skill from his previous career that he is bringing to teaching, he strategically plans for any possible event.

Buttercup started to talk to some colleagues about this habit of making several lesson plans looking to see if it resembles other teachers’ strategies, but his peers thought that planning three things was too much work and an unsustainable habit over time. Nevertheless, it does not discourage Buttercup because he has found that he feels in control when he has a plan for anything that can happen. Moreover, Buttercup added that it also helps him with the administrative requests, which he described as data meetings with the supervisors, meeting with parents about students’ progress, and paperwork that needs to be completed.
Reflecting on the video, Buttercup expressed that he would change the way he explained the lesson. He said that he would incorporate manipulatives because as he listened to the conversations of his students and he noticed that they struggled to explain the main idea.

**Journal Writing.** Mr. Buttercup submitted a journal with one entry at the end of the data collection time. This journal was a summary of all of his struggles, experiences, and big challenges as a teacher. He recorded, in a narrative way, his journey from the first day to the last day of the research.

The journal started by explaining the reasons he became a teacher. Although it was primarily the vacancy that one of his friends left in a school, there was also a hidden interest in Mr. Buttercup sharing his knowledge with others. He said that he had acquired some informal teaching experience during his college years because he was constantly providing explanations and clarifications to his peers on the content being taught by the professors. Nevertheless, he expressed that being a monitor in college and a teacher in a school have few commonalities.

Mr. Buttercup expressed that he has always been industrious in everything he does and that this teaching opportunity was not an exception. The moment he started, he was always striving to complete every task on time and to learn everything he needed to be able to the quality of his work. Every day in that second grade was for him an eye-opener of all the possibilities he had. He explained that when he arrived at this school, he did not know the program, lacked pedagogical knowledge, and had little knowledge of the developmental stages of these children, nevertheless, he did not let that stop him. He worked hard during the first week of professional development in the school to get to know as much as possible. He also found a way to pair up with another teacher whom he sought as a mentor for him. This teacher was not assigned by the school. He asked her to mentor him as much as possible. Mr. Buttercup
explained that he did this because he knew that with guidance and support he would have higher chances to succeed in this new journey.

Mr. Buttercup proceeded to described how his inquiry approach helped him develop strong relationships with his supervisors because he had the confidence to ask questions and request feedback. This showed his willingness to do better each day. Due to this attitude, Mr. Buttercup received extra duties, such as being in charge of the school’s maker space, and the afterschool robotic club. Mr. Buttercup explained that in one year he has grown as a teacher and he has felt trusted by his supervisors. He added that he has worked very hard this year. As a result, he feels that he has grown personally and professionally.

Class Observation. Upon entering the classroom, the students were sitting in the meeting area. The teacher began the class with Number Talk, where students had to represent the amount $2.75 using pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. The teacher provided opportunities for students to think about how to represent the amount, as well as, turn and talk to discuss with their partners. Mr. Buttercup used a video about time to review how to read the time. Students played an interactive game before going to work independently. Then, the teacher provided clear instructions before students go off to work independently.

During the independent time, students were observed raising their hands when they had doubts. Mr. Buttercup used formal and informal assessment strategies and instruments during this lesson, such as Math Quick Practice and Number Talk. Nevertheless, he was not observed taking notes of student learning. Mr. Buttercup consistently provided students with feedback as he quickly observed the work they were doing.
The students worked independently at their tables and in different areas of the classroom and Mr. Buttercup provided different resources for students to use throughout the lesson. The students completed an exit ticket on a flashcard at the end of the lesson.

**Research Questions Review and Findings**

The overarching research question for this study was: How does a sample of novice Dominican K-5 second-career teachers describe their first-year teaching experience and make meaning of the transition process that it entails?

To answer this broader question, I developed the following sub-questions:

(a) How do second-career professionals describe their transition into the teaching field?

(b) How do second-career professionals make meaning of the transition process they experience?

(c) How do second-career professionals make meaning of their experience as first-year teachers?

(d) How do second-career professionals describe the way their previous career influences their new teaching experience?

Although there is a difference between a transition process and an experience, as discussed in chapter 2, due to the shared content, I have combined the sub-questions (b) and (c) into one category. Therefore, this chapter will describe the following sub-themes:

- *Description of the transition into the teaching field*
- *Meaning-making of the transition and the experience*
- *Influence of the previous career into the teaching*
Presentation of Finding

The presentation of findings above has been organized responding to the main themes from data. The salient themes were aligned with the research questions. These themes were: (a) Transitioning into the teaching field, (b) Meaning-making of the transition and the experience, and (c) Influence of the previous career into the new teaching experience. Each theme is supported by vignettes that show the voice of the participants.

Transitioning into the teaching field

As discussed in chapter two, transitioning requires a cognitive change, a different type of mindset. The first factor in a transition, according to Bridges (2009), is to end a current status, to let go of the old ways, the old identity. This change of thinking was evident during the entire process of data collection with these teachers. Although, I did ask the specific questions of “How do you describe your transition into the teaching field?” not always was I able to receive a specific answer. Nevertheless, going through some fragments of the data it is possible to see some indicators that describe this transition.

Ms. Bubbles. Ms. Bubbles, in her interview, expressed that her journey started when an illness affected her father’s health. She explained:

“My parents planned to come to the DR, and they wanted me to go with them. After some thought I came but I didn’t have a plan. I just came and I would figure out what I would do when I got here...Then one thing led to another and I ended up supporting a Math center for fourth graders. Which was kind of like my first introduction to actually teaching. It was terrifying, I have never been more scared in my life to stand in front of anyone. And it was only 10 students, but I have never been more intimidated”.

This excerpt of the interview shows that Ms. Bubbles was ending her life in the United States, and the career she had. She started her transition process by letting go her known ways and comfort zone. Moreover, in her journal, she has several entries that describe the difficulties that she went through her adaptation process. Such as:

“Today was immensely difficult. I’m not sure what was in the air or the water, but the kids were super distracted today... Today I got home and felt like crying myself. It’s frustrating to see a situation or a child that clearly needs help and not be able to do anything”.

Another entry, in late October stated:

“I was quickly told that Halloween isn’t widely celebrated in this country and many parents are sensitive about it because of their religion. I had to change my lessons plans last minute and come up with a new one 5 minutes before class started which was terrifying... I never took into consideration the difference in culture which was thoughtless of me”.

The challenges described in these journal entries can be understood as part of the Neutral Zone of the transition process that Bridges (2009) describes. Bridges explains that the Neutral Zone is the part of the transition when people do not seem to be able to manage the old ways nor the new ways, experimenting significant levels of anxiety, doubts and low levels of productivity. In the case of this particular teacher, frustration, confusion and disorientation could be the signs of the neutral zone.

During the SRI, Ms. Bubbles also made some comments such as:

“...the thing is that I feel overwhelmed with these kids. I had prepared a wonderful lesson. In my head we were going to do so many amazing things that day, but I don’t know what is wrong with these children!”
“Is just that at this point in time I thought that everything would be more manageable. If I can sum it up in a word it would be defeated”.

These lines describe a teacher that feels overloaded and unable to manage the situation. Despite the time that she considers that she has invested in the new beginning, she still understands that she is still navigating the ambiguity.

**Ms. Blossom.** Ms. Blossom’s ending of the old, is stated in her interview when she said:

“A friend told me that, in a school ... they were looking for English teachers. And I was like: "and you think I could be good for that?" I wasn’t sure because my mom always as a child told me that I was a terrorist whenever I sat down with my little brother to teach him something. And she told me: "If I could do it, you could do it." And I said: "Ok, let's give it a try." And I went I went to the interview the day after my birthday, and I was tired, but I did my best anyway. The person who interviewed me liked it and I was hired for the position. The first time when we started classes I was super nervous.”

For this particular teacher, the beginning of the transition process was a choice. Although she was encouraged by a friend she did not really needed to change jobs. Since the transition is not an outcome, “but the ending you’ll have to make to leave the old situation behind” (Bridges, 2019, p. 7), making the ending by choice could make the whole transition less chaotic.

As we move forward with Ms. Blossom we can see through her diaries that she also faced several challenges. These challenges refer to a lack of motivation and frustration of not knowing how to handle pressure and some situations. Nevertheless, an added ingredient in this journal is the ability of this teacher of identifying with the new profession. The journal entries are as follows:
“Today I did not get up motivated, I woke up not wanting to come to do what I love the most. And it’s not that I feel tired ... but it’s too much, too much ...”

“Today I have 4 hours charged and only 45 minutes that become 35 because I have to take them to their Specials and get them, and the same with recess “35 minutes”. And ... eat in 15 minutes to give me some time or not to eat and I’m dizzy ... I take work home. Planning, charts... I get up every day to see who did Raz-Kids, who didn’t ... But I have since the parent-teacher conference wanting to make a plan for the children to take books, and I want to, but ... I need the time to prepare for that.”

“I don't want to break down, really. But all the extra things we have to do ... progress reports, team of teachers, STEAM fair. I know that at the beginning of the year administration checked my Schedule in an intent to support me and I said that I was going to handle it, but ... Woo! it’s too much and I don’t want to break, but if I continue as I go ... I'm going to break”.

“I love being a teacher. It is my vocation. I knew this by the first time I entered a classroom without experience and without training and from there I wanted to learn everything I needed to become a great teacher.”

As opposed to Ms. Bubbles, Ms. Blossom did not bring many concerns regarding students to the SRI. She kept a positive perspective of what she was seeing in the video. And after playing it she stated that:

“My expectations were not that students remained seated or quietly because we are just starting with this procedure. So, I can say that the intend of the lesson happened because they chose a place to sit and read, and that was the idea. Now, there are some things that I still need to work on and that is for them to stay quiet, remain in their chosen sits and eventually get to read!”
Mr. Buttercup. The beginning of a transition has a different description for everyone. In the case of Mr. Buttercup, his transition process started without him planning it and also because he had a particular need. In his interview he said:

“I had a friend who was working in a school and got sick unexpectedly just before the start of the school year, and as she knew I was not doing very well economically, she thought about me and I went to replace her last minute, just before starting the school year, I did not receive any instruction ... I arrived out of necessity because I needed the job and to help my friend too. When I saw myself there I said: ‘well I have to learn strategies how to handle this’”.

As it can be seen in this part if the interview, Mr. Buttercup started the process of letting go with an event in his life that was not really planned. He received the opportunity to become a teacher, and as this opportunity was a promising way to improve his economic situation, he decided to take it. Nevertheless, his he speaks with a positive attitude when he states “…I have to learn strategies to handle this”. In this particular situation, Mr. Buttercup’s attitude places him in a position of learning, opening his horizons for the upcoming stage “the neutral zone” in which he will explore what does it really mean to become a teacher, to embrace the new challenge, to transition.

Mr. Buttercup’s journal also had traces of the letting go mindset. He states that:

“My teaching journey just began, I never thought it will happen, but I do not regret a thing. I am trying to figure everything out, everything is new, from my responsibilities as an employee and rookie teacher to the way Math was taught. There is a lot I follow in order to succeed in such a demanding adventure. All the staff is kind and approachable; always open to questions, sharing and offering a hand when needed. It feels like the right place to work.”
Bridges (2009) explains that when people are in the first stage of the transition, called the “Ending of the old” they experience denial, shock, frustration, as they move to the neutral zone, nevertheless, this does not seem to be the case of Mr. Buttercup. In his narrative he is describing positive characteristics of his experience and he is using a vocabulary that embraces the challenge. The same language that was evident during the SRI, when after watching the 10-minutes video of the Math mini lesson he was teaching he reflected that:

“Well, the first thing that I can say that went well was the timing. I finally managed to last 10 minutes in the mini lesson. I also think that the explanation was clear, and it seemed to be that they were having fun and also understanding because they answered the questions and were able to participate... they are talking a lot... and it is a little difficult to bring them back to the explanation. So I assumed that they are interesting sharing information with their peers.”

“... I actually wasn’t aware at the moment of the noisy class I was having. I am bringing it up now that I saw it. I mean, I didn’t even see the video before this meeting, I just made sure to have a video for today... I felt at the moment that I was kind of talking too much and too loudly, but I didn’t realize that it was because they were talking that much among them... a challenged was to actually deliver the content because we were all taking together. I mean, at the moment I was only focused in teaching but now that I see it, the teaching was hard because I didn’t have their attention, which I didn’t realized until now”.

“Prior this lesson, it was a challenged for me to be able to unpack the content I was going to teach because, since I have my mathematical brain I see math a big chunk of something I can understand but then when it comes to make 2nd graders understand I have to change my lenses and split the chunk in little pieces”.
As we look through Mr. Buttercup’s data it is possible to see evidence of struggles in this new role. Nevertheless, the attitude that the teacher uses to embrace the challenge does not make the common traits of leaving the “letting go” stage visible.

**Meaning-making of the transition and the experience**

To explain how people make meaning of experiences, it is necessary to draw on the theory that explains this process. In this sense, Sommer, Baumeister, and Stillman (2013) explain that to make meaning out of experiences, people must be able to relate the experience with a purpose, a sense of efficacy, some set of values, or self-worth. These layers are Four Needs for meaning-making that according to Baumesiter (1991) people seek to fill when searching for meaning for their lived experiences. Based on this statement, the participants of this study lived experiences reveal some of these must-have needs. Ms. Blossom’s making meaning process is evident in the quotes in Table 3.

Table 3

*Quotes of Ms. Blossom’s Meaning Making Process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Efficacy | *I had to fit in a lot of material, and I was very wise about the time.*  
*So, my transitions were really short, and it was pretty good because it didn’t give them time to do anything else. It didn’t give them any wiggle room to break that mindset. It was for the most time really good.* | Interview |
| Purpose | *So, for me a big part of teaching is to be able to reach out that child that you see struggling and help them grow not just with the subject but help them feel welcome, help them feel included, help them feel loved, and with that they will know everything else will come.* | Interview |
Table 3- Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Value         | *As a teacher you are constantly... working together to make sure that the kids have the best resource and education that they possibly can. And that taught me not only to work in a group but how to work effectively in a group, with administration, coworkers and the students. Because you need to work together with the students as well...*  
*...it (teaching) helps me approach them (kids in my personal life setting) in a way like: Ok, I know how his brain works, I know what kind of mindset he is in. So it helps me with not just work but my personal life it's made me very different, think different. It is incredible how I look at the world now.*  
| Interview     |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |         |
| Self-worth    | *The teacher from the beginning of the school year was nervous, not very confident, shaky but the teacher at the end was definitely a lot more confident, able to communicate more effectively, way more organized, and has a feeling of fulfillment that I did something that matters.*  
| Interview     |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |         |

These quotes evidence that Ms. Blossom’s attempt of making meaning of the teaching experience revolves around each of the four needs. In the case of Ms. Bubbles, the meaning of her experience is much more attached to her purpose and self-worth as evident in quotes in Table 4.

As evident in these quotes, for Ms. Bubbles the making-meaning process has been grounded in the satisfaction of giving, and the growth that she has been able to identify through the challenges she has experienced in the journey.
Table 4

Quotes of Ms. Bubble’s Meaning Making Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>“Teaching has been a learning journey. You can make mistakes but learn from your mistakes. Do things wrong but learn where you are wrong. Read, investigate, observe, ask for help. This is very important. I have learned a lot from that because each educational center has its rules, so many times as much as you think you know something you ask for help, you ask for advice and how the light bulb turns on and you learn from your mistakes.”</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-worth</td>
<td>“... to teach is to give... you communicate something new to someone who did not know. Transmit new knowledge of anything to someone... and there isn’t a bigger joy than to know that others are growing because of your work.”</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. Buttercup refers more to the need of efficacy and values, as shown in Table 5.

During his interview, the SRI and on his journal he explains that he feels full filled with a well-done job and hard work.

Table 5

Quotes of Mr. Buttercup’s Meaning Making Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy</td>
<td>“Prior this lesson, it was a challenged for me to be able to unpack the content I was going to teach because, since I have my mathematical brain I see math aa a big chunk of something I can understand but then when it comes to make 2nd graders understand I have to change my lenses and split the chunk in little pieces... it is hard but very gratifying when I can make it happen”.</td>
<td>SRI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Making-meaning of experiences could be a difficult process to explain because it will vary depending on each person’s previous lived experiences and their perception of the new experience. Nevertheless, these teachers have been able to fill their meaning-making needs to make sense of a second career in their lives.

**Influence of previous career into the teaching**

When asked about the influence that the previous career had on these teachers, answers did not vary broadly. The three of them were able to identify a way in which their previous career was related to the teaching experience they were having, but this new experience was not necessarily influenced by their teaching. Table 6 shows the single quotes used by the teachers to refer to their previous career and their new experience.

### Table 6

*Influence of the Previous Career*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Blossom</td>
<td>“Well, to be honest... nothing (from my previous career is evident) really. And I think it is because it wasn’t my previous career that brought me here, it was actually my hobby which is music. So, of that you are going to see a lot because it is like I am a content special in that area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 - Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Bubbles</td>
<td>“I studied advertising, with a background like in monitoring ads for different companies and now that you mention it, I could use some of my advertising strategies to sell this independent reading time to these children. I don’t see any of my previous career in this video. I do see a struggling teacher!!! But I am not hopeless because they are in the process of learning!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Buttercup</td>
<td>“I would say that, the fact that I am teaching math and I am an engineer. Like, the Math level that I am used to handle is way more complex that the one I am teaching and sometimes I feel so lost in the way I am supposed to teach. It is not only different from what I learned but it is also different from the way I learned it. I wasn’t given so many strategies to solve problem. I wasn’t even given a problem. But know I am supposed to expect that these children understand equations in context and be able to choose among different strategies which one they want to use.</td>
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</table>

Although the three participants were able to refer to their previous career to find how it has influenced the teaching experience, they did not identify any specific skill from their past career. Nevertheless, the previous career has provided teachers with a different eye to see things, as they were able to reflect on the similarities or differences when asked to think back about the previous career. Therefore, it could be interpreted that the previous career may not influence the teaching
experience directly, but it could be the frame that unconsciously is guiding them through the journey.

**Chapter IV Closure**

This chapter presented the data collected on the development of three novice second-career teachers. It described the narratives of the participants’ experiences collected through interviews, class observations, video stimulated recalled interviews, and journaling and provided a cross-case comparison of the data. The next chapter will present the main findings of the research and will answer the research questions supported by the cooperation of the participants and the literature on transition and meaning-making.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

In this section, I will present the discussion of the findings. It presents the main findings of the research and answers the research questions. The lived experiences of the participants and their meaning-making journey provided significant insights into the reality of professional and personal reality of novice second-career teachers. Supported by the cooperation of the participants and the literature on transition and meaning-making, this chapter will unpack research outcomes.

Second-Career Teachers Motivations

The participants of this study represent a group of non-teaching professionals that entered the teaching field for similar reasons as the ones stated by Tigchelaar et. al (2010), these include but are not limited to:

(a) Internal motivation: the idea of giving to others, the willingness to share their knowledge, a hidden desire for teaching, among others.

(b) External motivations: it implies a higher step in their professional growth, it provides job security, it allows for family time representing a more fulfilling life, it is a change

The participants of this study stated that they became teachers because mainly due to external factors: economic necessity and job opportunity.

“I wasn’t doing very well in my current job, economically speaking and a friend got sick right before starting a school year and asked me to replace her and I did...” Mr. Buttercup (Interview)

“I came with my parents to the DR and since my mom was going to work in a school I just though I will applied to a couple of different schools for any kind of job, even
administrative... then the Music teacher position opened and since I had some qualifications for it and it payed more I considered to apply.” Ms. Blossom (Interview)

“I needed some extra money and started to teach as a side job until I realized that I liked it and got an opportunity to do it as a full job.” Ms. Bubbles (Interview)

Although these participants do not represent the vast majority of second-career teachers, it is possible to say that the external factors that drive non-teaching professionals to become teachers underlie an internal decision that emerges through the experience and leads to internal change.

**Transition and Meaning-Making**

When transition is discussed it is impossible to avoid discussing change since it is the most visible part of the transition. Based on Bridges’ (2009) transition framework, there are three stages of transition: the end of the old, the neutral zone, and the new beginning. It was commonly observed that the participants of this study, although dealing with their process of transition were mostly experiencing the neutral zone.

The first story shows Ms. Bubbles, a pharmacist who changed countries and switched jobs to enter the teaching professions upon arriving. Ms. Bubbles’ journey included several changes within a short period, that could be described as part of one transition process. Moreover, this former pharmacist approach to all these events, and the way she chooses to deal with each of them is what determines the transition.

It was evident that the stage of “the end of the old” had happened for Ms. Bubbles because she stated during an SRI that she was “certain that I am not going back to be a pharmacist, at least for now. It was not even my first career option anyway” but the new event that she was leading to was not yet a comfortable zone for her.
During the first interview, Ms. Bubbles stated that she thought that she was not qualified for the position and therefore, not sure if she was “going to be able to pull it through”. Nevertheless, by looking through the different sources of data a sense of the neutral stage is identifiable. In her journal’s entrees of January, in the middle of the school year she stated:

“I feel like I got nothing done today yet I am exhausted. I am nervous for next week... it’s getting harder and harder to come up with the best activities to make them learn and enjoy the class at the same time”.

That statement talks about a person that is struggling but is also interested in improving her performance. This could mean that she was not fully comfortable with the teaching she has done so far, and the activity has emotional repercussions in her life.

Although, in her journal she writes about continuing to face pedagogical and behavioral challenges, closer to the end of the school year, she expressed that she was “starting to notice the progress children have made... it makes my heart soar to see that I helped them achieved that!”.

This statement represents a sense of accomplishment and confidence in the work she had done. It also shows an acceptance of the ending of her old life and acceptance of her new identity, as a music teacher.

The second story is Ms. Blossom’s, an advertising professional that worked several jobs before landing into teaching. In the case of Ms. Blossom, she was moved to the teaching field a gradually by starting with an afternoon job in an English academy. This middle step between being and advertising professional and becoming a full time teacher could have eased Ms. Blossom’s journey. As Schlosberg (2010) explains, the use of strategies during transitions tend to facilitate the individual the process of coping with the new beginning.
Although Ms. Blossom expressed insecurities during the beginning stages of the transition process, the previous experience as an English academy teacher in the afternoons gave her the confidence she needed to embrace the change with a positive attitude. She stated the following:

“really, I was afraid of not doing it right... I had only taught English before and I thought they (the school) was going to hire me as a teacher aide because of my lack of experience, and I was cool with that... when they told me that I was going to be a homeroom teacher, the only thing that gave me a little peace was the fact that I had a little teaching experience in the English academy. I knew it wasn’t going to be the same, but something was better than nothing” (Interview).

In fact, Ms. Blossom’s positive attitude permeated several aspects of her transition. In her journal, during the first days of school she wrote:

“The first weeks of training I always went in with all my energy and willingness to do and learn everything I needed, although sometimes I felt lost. Everything was going very fast. When I got home, since I had another job, I arrived at nights with my brain melted and exhausted, but I read all the school material... Before the first day began I felt a combination of nerves and emotion... I was a teacher without experience and without training... I wanted to learn everything I needed to become a great teacher”.

Ms. Blossom’s data shows a journey were challenges were welcomed. For instance, during the first SRI, around October, Ms. Blossom shared the following experiences that describe her approach to the challenges she faced.

“Well, according to what I was taught (in school professional development sessions), I am supposed to be able to do tons of things when my students work independently but that is not
much the case. So, I wanted to bring this (video of a part of her class) to see if it would help me identify what is wrong.”

“Well, let me start trying to explain what this is. I read a book about the first days of school and stuff, so I am trying here to establish procedures and routines. My expectations were not that students remained seated or quietly because we are just starting with this procedure. So, I can say that the intend of the lesson happened because they chose a place to sit and read, and that was the idea. Now, there are some things that I still need to work on and that is for them to stay quiet, remain in their chosen sits and eventually get to read!”

“Here I had a plan. It didn’t go as I thought or wanted it to go but I set my expectation in writing. Before I was just coming in trying to teach something. After reading some things and receiving the support of a coach at school I kind of have a different vision, and I am starting to set expectations for them… I am working to see a perfectly quiet independent time that allows me to work in small groups with some students while the other kids are working on their own… I am sure that I we can get there, we can”.

Ms. Blossom was entering the teaching field as a second-career teacher, and was also undergoing a transition process, but the fact that she had some experience in teaching even when it was in other settings made the “ending of the old” stage for her smoother. Schlossberg (2011) explains, that the most significant in the transition process is being able to live the process as a positive experience and expands on the idea that the four Ss (situation, self, support, and strategies) provide the path to allow the positive experience. In the particular case of Ms. Blossom, the situation, self and support are very evident in her process.

The third and last story presents the case of Mr. Buttercup, an engineer that after graduating found a job in a small company. Mr. Buttercup arrived at the teaching career because
he was a good friend that wanted to cover a last-minute vacancy that his friend was leaving in a
school right at the beginning of the school year, in the mathematical area. He also needed the
money and did not mind the extra work that he would have to put into learning these new skills.
Mr. Buttercup’s journey could be considered as a major transition. Since he quit his office job to
become a math teacher.

When looking at Mr. Buttercup’s data it was evident that even when he embraced the
challenge of becoming a teacher, he did not have much professional support aside from his
abilities to self-learn. He explained that:

“I got to the teaching field because I had a need. I did not know anything about it but as a
mathematician, I just thought about the extra money I was going to receiving... When I saw
myself in a classroom I said: Oh my! I have to learn strategies on how to handle this. In the
beginning, I did a lot of research on the internet, I also tried to remember the things my teachers
did and that I liked, and so on... from there it was like a construction.”

Also, during both of the SRI interviews, Mr. Buttercup showed evidence of the use of
strategies such as self-directed learning, trial, and error, among others, to deal with the new turn
that his life was taking.

“I am currently trying to understand the math workshop model and I was able to record a
10-minute math mini-lesson... I was a little nervous because it is something new for me in terms
of the workshop model... I have been working to reach that goal for so long and yesterday I
finally did it, so that motivated me...”

“I need to improve... on actually delivering the content because we were all talking
together. I mean, at the moment I was only focused on teaching but now that I see it, the teaching
was hard because I didn’t have their attention, which I didn’t realized until now.”
Those statements reflect a transition that still is not completed but it is definitely in process. According to Bridges (2009), the last stage of transition is the “New Beginning” which implies a change of mindset as the person becomes confident performing the tasks, duties, and responsibilities that their new role requires. The development of this new identity could take more time to settle than what it would take to internalize the change. In the case of the participants of this study, they are still in the process of building up the new identity.

Mezirow (1996) theory that underlies transformation establishes that the internal changes that a person experience during a transition are constructed based on the lived experiences, making each transition process unique. Although there is not an established period in which it is possible to say that you have completed a transition process because it is an ongoing process, the participants of this study agreed that by engaging in journal writing, and conversations about their practices they were able to take time to reflect on the process they were undergoing as they became teachers. As explained by Trevallion (2015) a reflective practice provides professionals useful insights to constantly improve their practice.

**Second-Career Teachers as Novice Teachers**

As presented in the literature review, the main challenges that novice teachers experience are: (a) personal: sometimes regarding money, identity, ability to meet basic needs, etc.; (b) professional: as they start to understand their roles and responsibilities as contributors to the society; (c) curriculum, instruction and assessment; (d) relationship with students and their learning; and (e) facing an unsupportive work environment.

Although these challenges were identified as the most common ones, the participants of this study referenced only a few of them. For example, participants referred to the personal challenge by expressing their need to earn more money:
“I honestly started because I needed money. So I had a job from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and then I would teach from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. … I just wanted extra cash until I realized that I liked it.” Ms. Blossom (Interview).

“I was working in a small office, with a low income... A friend. She knew that I wasn’t doing very well and thought about me to cover for her.” Mr. Buttercup (Interview).

The participants also made references to the curriculum and instructional challenges. For instance, Ms. Bubbles commented:

“I dint know the level of preparation and work that went into the ground level teaching. I didn’t know, and I didn’t expect the challenges that I encountered… I didn’t expect the workload nor... the level of differentiation in their language skills...(SRI)”

Another comment from Ms. Blossom regarding curriculum challenges express that:

“It was very overwhelming to be a homeroom teacher, to learn new content for me, learn how to teach them... plus all the pressure on being new to an institution where you need to give 200% to make a statement, well, that’s what I do. (Interview)”

Mr. Buttercup experienced some curriculum challenges as well. As he shared his story in one of his journal entries:

“I dare to say that I have a pretty good math background, but I did not know the program nor the vocabulary... I took the math program times home, asked a few questions to other teachers, began lesson planning, looking for activities… talking to audiences is not my favorite thing to do, even though it is cool with the kids. I had jitters all the time and the program in my hands because I was still learning to keep track of the whole lesson in mind.”

Also, Ms. Blossom also referred to the workload and her inability to feel that she was able to accomplish everything:
“I take work home. Planning, charts... I get up early every day to see who did Raz-Kids, who didn’t before going to school... I have since the parent-teacher conference wanting to make a plan for the children to take books, and I want to, but ... I need the time to prepare for that (journal)”. 

Regarding the relationship with students and their learning, the three participants evidenced some kind of interest and positive approach to this matter. The participants of the study were constantly interested in student’s participation, engagement, and learning. These phrases are evidence found in the interviews and journal:

“I started to get to know each student, so it was like ok this student is very smart, but she is bored she doesn’t want to apply herself, so I got to get around that.” Ms. Bubbles (Interview)

“... if you work on then emotionally and if you gain their trust, and if you have that connection with each student, they will learn.” Ms. Bubbles (Journal)

“I had to build a relationship with these kids to teach them better. They didn’t seem very used to received nice comments from people. I learned a lot with them.” Ms. Blossom (Interview)

“These children are small, they are still learning, and I guess I have to give them time to adjust.” Ms. Blossom (Journal)

“... and the fact of realizing that each child is different and has a different need makes you become a psychologist, mom, military, everything.” Mr. Buttercup (Journal)

“the children are paying attention. Now they seem like they are having fun not only because they look happy, they are doing what I ask them to do but they are also sharing with their partners about things related to the lesson.” Mr. Buttercup (Interview)
As Chamber (2002) expressed these novice second-career teachers enrich the content of their teaching by supporting it with their previous career experience. This was especially evident with Ms. Bubbles and Mr. Buttercup as they became teachers of a subject that were related to their previous careers. Ms. Bubbles said the following:

“I am a content specialist in this area. I see that I am very knowledgeable of the music curriculum and the stuff that a musician must learn along with their instructional life, but not that much of how to teach those concepts currently. And I say currently because I am doing it as my teachers did to me but not necessarily as a 21st-century child would learn it. (SRI)”

Mr. Buttercup also expressed the realization of being knowledgeable of the content but not necessarily equipped to transmit that knowledge.

“...it was a challenge for me to be able to unpack the content I was going to teach because, since I have my mathematical brain I see math as a big chunk of something I can understand but then when it comes to making 2nd graders understand I have to change my lenses and split the chunk into little pieces. (SRI)”

In the case of the teachers in this study, as Varadharajan (2014) supported, they were able to juggle with their lack of pedagogical knowledge and learning strategies due to the support they received, resulting in a better performance.

The last challenge that according to the literature, novice teachers face is the unsupportive environment. The findings of this study provide evidence that the participants did not develop in an unsupportive environment, on the contrary, they mentioned several situations when they received colleague or administrator support.
“with the elementary team... was also supported with professional development, with meetings and following up with certain cases that when reported were immediately addressed”. Ms. Bubbles (Interview).

“... the support of my colleagues help me every day in the classroom with little things and the administrative support has helped me to grow as a professional, further expanding my mind in different professional fields so that I know how to handle the classroom and the children in the long term”. Ms. Blossom (Interview)

“...the whole program was in my mind, the class structure pretty clear, and did not have to go back and forth into the lesson plan. It felt good to have this opportunity and getting all this support during the process”. Mr. Buttercup (Journal)

Novice second-career teachers experience similar challenges as regular novice teachers. Understandably, second-career teachers do not face the professional challenges identified by Rutherford (2009) because, they have already been professionals, they have already experienced the roles and responsibilities of being a working member of the society as they come from a previous job.

**The Transformation**

Bandura’s social cognitive theory explains that people’s behavior is a reflection of their experiences, the actions of others, and the environmental factors. Based on this theory it is possible to say that each person has a lens from which to embrace new experiences that are unique to his or her nature. Therefore, behavior change is also connected to an internal transition process. This internal transition process is non-transferable because it is specific to each individual’s lived experiences.
As evident in the findings of the study, every participant had his and her own lived experiences that helped them through the change process and cope with the new beginning, the big event of becoming a teacher. Although none of them were able to identify or label their experience as a transformative one, they were able to talk about actions, paradigms, and development of new ideas which according to Roberson (1991) is the center of transformative learning.

Moreover, these novice second-career teachers are now a group of adults that have embraced a continuous learning process. As they continue their journey, their frames of references will continue to get updated (Mezirow, 1997) changing their interpretation of events and their expectations, actions, and reactions of future experiences.

**Research and Policy Recommendations**

This section presents the research and policy recommendations after exploring the personal, emotional, and professional implications that the transition into teaching can have for a second-career teacher in the DR. The purpose of this study was to understand how novice Dominican second-career teachers describe their first-year teaching experience and make meaning of the transition process that it entails.

As evidenced by the data collected, making meaning processes and transitions vary among individuals, supported by their previous experience. Nevertheless, the process of reflecting on their teaching, being able to analyze situations, and study cases where they were the main characters, helped the participants identify the different aspects of their teaching that needed to be strengthened.

In each of the SRI interviews that the participants held, they identified behaviors, attitudes, and demeanor about themselves that they would have done differently, or that they would
commit to change. This practice of inviting constructive criticism of their performance resulted in improved practices, as they would consciously try to do specific things differently once they went back to the classroom. Additionally, by self-identifying their areas of improvement, the teachers were able to design their learning pathways that will fill their particular needs.

Furthermore, the participants of this study shared that by engaging in journal writing they were able to go through difficult moments with ease and to clear their thinking, and find a different perspective to address challenging situations. The participants said that they found the SRI sessions and the journal writing helpful for their teaching practice, although they did not always find the time to write when they did, they were able to connect with their feelings and release some of the tension resulting in a positive outcome.

The DR is currently working on revisions and adjustments to the entire educational system to enhance the quality of the country’s education. If the goal is to continually upgrade the quality of the education, having teachers that can reflect on their practice and self-assess their performance can ensure there will be a group of professionals that will always be growing and updating their knowledge and skills for the benefit of their students. Therefore, I strongly recommend reflective journaling and self-recorded case analysis to be included as part of the curriculum for the formal training of the teaching professionals.

Understanding the personal, emotional, and professional implications that the transition into teaching that these second-career teachers experienced should be considered in the professional preparation of second-career teachers. The particularities of the meaning-making process that second-career teachers experience as they transition into the teaching field pose a challenge for how to support this minority group professionally. Nevertheless, there is a need to differentiate and even personalize the career support for second-career teachers.
This multiple case study was based on three participants and four sources of data. Having multiple sources of data contributed to a broad description and understanding of the different stages of the process. Nevertheless, due to the personalized nature of the transition process for each individual, it could be beneficial to expand this study with more participants. This will provide more variety in teaching levels, types of schools, and socio-economic status that could impact the strategies, attitudes, and web of support needed to cope with change, manage transition, and experience transformation.

For further research, I would recommend the same type of study considering a bigger population that includes teachers from middle and high school levels to have a broader data set on the adaptation, teaching, and transitioning process of these professional. Another area of study could consider the role that gender plays in the ease of the transition process. This study sample included two female teachers and one male, it would be interesting to see the role of gender in a broader study with similar numbers of male and female teachers.

Finally, throughout this research, I learned that as individuals we must embrace the uniqueness that our lived experiences provide us. They help us become what we are and allow us to give and perform to the best of our abilities. Therefore, our experiences being good or bad, memorable, or forgettable, they are the reason for us being who we are. Let us embrace our uniqueness because no one else can be who we are and do what we do.
REFERENCES


Trevallion, D. (2015). The importance of reflective journaling as a research tool used to analyze the professional identity of pre service technology teachers. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change.* 2(2), 1-28


Appendix A

Informed Consent

**Western Michigan University**

*[Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology]*

**Principal Investigator:** [Dr. Reeves]

**Student Investigator:** [Paula Nunez]

**Title of Study:** [First-Year Second-career Teachers Participating in a Teacher Certification Program: Experiences and Meaning-making of the Transition Process]

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "First-Year Second-career Teachers Participating in a Teacher Certification Program: Experiences and Meaning-making of the Transition Process." This project will serve as Paula Nunez’s dissertation for the requirements of the Ph. D. degree. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

**What are we trying to find out in this study?**

The purpose of this study is to explore how a group of Dominican second-career teachers participating in a certification program make meaning of their transition process into the teaching career and describe their experience during their first-year as practicing teachers. For the purpose
of this study, second career teachers are defined as those practicing K-5 teachers who started teaching after having acquired a previous profession. This study will examine teachers’ transition process and also their current teaching experience.

**Who can participate in this study?**

To participate in this study, you must meet the following criteria to be included:

1. Be within 21 to 99 years old
2. Held a career that is not teaching.
3. Have at least 2 years of experience on their first-career
4. Are experiencing their first-year teaching

If you meet either of the following, you cannot participate in the study:

1. You are less than 21 years old.
2. You have no experience in your previous career.

**Where will this study take place?**

We will conduct the interviews at a location convenient to you; where we can protect your confidentiality, such as a library conference room, my office, or other non-residential location that is private. Also, when you decide that the time is convenient, the researcher will ask your supervisor for permission to go to your school to do a classroom observation.

**What is the time commitment for participating in this study?**
As a participant, you will be asked to complete five interviews that will last from 45-60 minutes. These interviews will happen during a 5 months period and will be scheduled at your convenience. You will also be asked to participate in a full day classroom observation. For this observation, you do not have to modify your regular work activities. You will also be asked to make several entries a week to a reflective journal in which you record your experience in your journey of becoming a teacher. This journal writing will last the time that you consider necessary to record the full picture of the experience.

The approximate time investment of participating in this research is 27 hours. Five semi-structured interviews of 60 minutes each, one full-day observation of 7 hours, and several journal entries a week of approximately 1 hour for a five-months period.

**What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?**

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Start a reflective journal the day you agree to participate in the research. In this journal, you will record your experiences teaching, your path through making meaning of what you are living, and your discoveries in your new practice. You will be encouraged to make several entries a week to the journal, and to use your preferred way of expression, words, drawings, voice recording, etc.

2. Participate in 5 semi-structured interviews that will be audio-recorded and transcribed, in which we will talk about your experiences with transitioning to the teaching field and your first-year as a practicing teacher. The audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription and all potentially identifying information will be removed. During the
interview, you will be encouraged to share documents or artifacts that help you explain
your journey in becoming a teacher.

3. After the interview, you will receive the transcript to review it and add any detail that you
feel that needs to be recorded.

4. Invite the researcher to observe a regular teaching day in your classroom. In this
observation, the researcher will see how some of the aspects that came up during the
interview are visible in your classroom reality.

What information is being measured during the study?
The researcher will collect information from you regarding your journey into becoming a teacher
from your background as a second-career professional. In this study, you will describe your
experiences teaching, your path through making meaning of what you are living, and your
discoveries in your new practice.

   From the journals, the researcher will get information about your experiences teaching, your path
   through making meaning of what you are living, and your discoveries in your new practice.

   From the semi-structured interview, the researcher will collect your experiences with
   transitioning to the teaching field and your first-year as a practicing teacher. From the
   observations, the researcher will document the way in which some of the aspects that came up
during the interview are visible in your classroom reality.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
If you participate in this study, you may be subjected to: (a) loss of anonymity, in order to protect
your identity, the researcher will change your name and use pseudonym; (b) potential discomfort
associated with class observation and having someone reading your journal, to minimize this risk the researcher will only do the observation when or if you notify that you are willing and ready; and you will be ask not to identify your journals if you do not want to be recognized; (c) time devoted to the study, regarding the time inconvenience, the researcher will make sure to schedule meetings at times and locations that best fit your needs.

**What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

You will not receive any direct personal benefits aside from the chance to share your experiences and allow others to learn from them. The general benefit of the study is that the results may contribute to the understanding of the transition of second-career teachers and their needs in their preparation.

**Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?**

As a participant the approximate time investment is 27 hours. Five semi-structured interviews of 60 minutes each. One full-day observation of 7 hours and a journal entry a week of approximately 1 hour for a five-month period.

**Is there any compensation for participating in this study?**

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

**Who will have access to the information collected during this study?**
The researcher is the only person who will have direct access to the information collected. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

1. Use pseudonyms for each participant.
3. Keep all data in a safe and locked place.
4. Use password protected files stored on a password protected encrypted data storage device.
5. Destroy audio recordings once they are transcribed.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?

You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the student investigator, [Paula Nunez] at [809 705 0069] or [paulad.nunez@gmail.com], or the primary investigator [Dr. Patricia Reeves] at [269 387 3527] or [patricia.reeves@wmich.edu]. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board.
chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

__________________________________________________________________________

Participant’s signature                        Date
Usted ha sido invitado a participar en un proyecto de investigación titulado "Maestros de segunda carrera en su primer año de docencia mientras participan en un programa de certificación: Experiencias y significado del proceso de transición". Este proyecto servirá como disertación de Paula Núñez para completar los requisitos del grado de doctorado. Este documento de consentimiento explica el propósito de este proyecto de investigación y repasa todos los compromisos de tiempo, los procedimientos utilizados en el estudio y los riesgos y beneficios de participar en este proyecto de investigación. Lea este formulario de consentimiento con cuidado y por completo y formule cualquier pregunta si necesita más aclaraciones.

¿Qué estamos tratando de descubrir en este estudio?

El propósito de este estudio es explorar cómo un grupo de maestros dominicanos de segunda carrera que participan en un programa de certificación da sentido a su proceso de transición en la
carrera docente y describe su experiencia durante el primer año como docentes en ejercicio. Para el propósito de este estudio, los profesores de segunda carrera se definen como aquellos que maestros de colegios practicantes que comenzaron a enseñar después de haber adquirido una carrera previa. Este estudio examinará el proceso de transición de los docentes y también su experiencia docente actual.

¿Quién puede participar en este estudio?

Para participar en este estudio, debe cumplir con los siguientes criterios:

1. Ser hombre o mujer, dentro de los 21 a 99 años
2. Tener una carrera que no sea educación.
3. Tener al menos 2 años de experiencia en su primera carrera
4. Estar en el proceso de completar el programa de certificación de docente
5. Estar pasando por su primer año como docente en una escuela privada (porque solo las escuelas privadas pueden emplear maestros de segunda carrera antes de finalizar su programa de certificación)

Si cumple con cualquiera de los siguientes, no puede participar en el estudio:

1. Tiene menos de 21 años.
2. Durante su corto tiempo de enseñanza, se ha dado cuenta de que no desea continuar enseñando.

¿Dónde se llevará a cabo este estudio?
Realizaremos las entrevistas en un lugar conveniente para usted; donde podamos proteger su confidencialidad, como una sala de conferencias de una biblioteca, mi oficina u otra ubicación no residencial que sea privada. Además, cuando decida que es el momento adecuado, la investigadora pedirá permiso a su supervisor para ir a su escuela a hacer una observación en el aula.

¿Cuál es el tiempo de compromiso para participar en este estudio?
Como participante, se le pedirá que complete seis entrevistas que durarán de 45 a 60 minutos. Estas entrevistas se realizarán durante un período de 5 meses y se programarán según su conveniencia. Se necesitará un día de trabajo completo para la observación en el aula. Para esta observación, no tiene que modificar sus actividades laborales habituales. También se le pedirá que haga varias entradas a la semana a un diario reflexivo en el que registra su experiencia en su viaje para convertirse en maestro. Esta escritura del diario durará el tiempo que considere necesario para registrar la imagen completa de la experiencia.

¿Qué se te pedirá que hagas si eliges participar en este estudio?
Si elige participar en este estudio, se le pedirá que:

1. Comience un diario reflexivo el día que acepta participar en la investigación. En este diario, registrará sus experiencias de enseñanza, su camino a través proceso de dar significado a lo que está viviendo y sus descubrimientos en su nueva práctica. Se le alentará a hacer varias entradas al diario por semana y a usar su forma preferida de expresión, palabras, dibujos, grabación de voz, etc.
2. Participe en entrevistas semiestructuradas que se grabarán y transcribirán en audio, en las que hablaremos sobre sus experiencias con la transición al campo de la enseñanza y su primer año como profesor en ejercicio. Las grabaciones de audio se destruirán después de la transcripción y se eliminará toda la información potencialmente identificable. Durante la entrevista, se le animará a compartir documentos o artefactos que lo ayuden a explicar su viaje para convertirse en maestro.

3. Después de la entrevista, recibirá la transcripción para revisarla y agregar cualquier detalle que considere necesario registrar.

4. Invite al investigador a observar un día de enseñanza regular en su salón de clases. En esta observación, el investigador verá cómo algunos de los aspectos que surgieron durante la entrevista son visibles en la realidad de su clase.

¿Qué información se mide durante el estudio?

El investigador recopilará información de usted con respecto a su viaje para convertirse en un maestro desde su experiencia como profesional de segunda carrera. En este estudio describirá sus experiencias de enseñanza, su camino a través del significado de lo que está viviendo, y sus descubrimientos en su nueva práctica.

¿Cuáles son los riesgos de participar en este estudio y cómo se minimizarán estos riesgos?

Si participa en este estudio, estará sujeto a la pérdida del anonimato y el tiempo dedicado al estudio. Para garantizar que permanezca anónimo, el investigador cambiará su nombre y usará un seudónimo. En cuanto a los inconvenientes de tiempo, el investigador se asegurará de programar reuniones en horarios y lugares que se ajusten mejor a sus necesidades.
¿Cuáles son los beneficios de participar en este estudio?

No recibirá ningún beneficio personal directo aparte de la posibilidad de compartir sus experiencias y permitir que otros aprendan de ellas. El beneficio general del estudio es que los resultados contribuirán a la comprensión de la transición de los docentes de segunda carrera y sus necesidades de preparación.

¿Hay algún costo asociado con la participación en este estudio?

No hay costos asociados con la participación en este estudio.

¿Hay alguna compensación por participar en este estudio?

No hay compensación por participar en este estudio.

¿Quién tendrá acceso a la información recopilada durante este estudio?

El investigador hará todo lo posible para preservar su confidencialidad, incluyendo lo siguiente:

1. Evitar tratar con datos en lugares públicos.
2. Usar seudónimos para cada participante.
3. Hacer copia de seguridad de archivos electrónicos.
4. Mantener todos los datos en un lugar seguro y cerrado.
5. Utilizar archivos protegidos con contraseña almacenados en un dispositivo de almacenamiento de datos cifrados protegidos con contraseña.
6. Destruir las grabaciones de audio una vez que se transcriben.
Sus datos se mantendrán confidenciales excepto en los casos en que el investigador esté legalmente obligado a informar incidentes específicos. Estos incidentes incluyen, pero no se limitan a, incidentes de abuso y riesgo de suicidio.

¿Qué pasa si quieres dejar de participar en este estudio?
Puede elegir dejar de participar en el estudio en cualquier momento y por cualquier motivo. No sufrirá ningún perjuicio o penalización por su decisión de detener su participación. No experimentará NINGUNA consecuencia, ya sea académica o personalmente, si decide retirarse de este estudio.

El investigador también puede decidir suspender su participación en el estudio sin su consentimiento.

Si tiene alguna pregunta antes o durante el estudio, puede comunicarse con el investigador principal, [Paula Núñez] al [809 705 0069] o [paulad.nunez@gmail.com]. También puede comunicarse con la Presidencia, la Junta de Revisión Institucional de Sujetos Humanos al 269-387-8293 o el Vicepresidente de Investigación al 269-387-8298 si surgen preguntas durante el curso del estudio.

Este documento de consentimiento ha sido aprobado para su uso por un año por la Junta de Revisión Institucional de Sujetos Humanos (HSIRB) según lo indicado por la fecha y firma del presidente de la junta en la esquina superior derecha. No participe en este estudio si la fecha del sello es anterior a un año.
He leído este documento de consentimiento informado. Los riesgos y beneficios me han sido explicados. Acepto tomar parte en este estudio.

Por favor imprima su nombre

___________________________________  ______________________
Firma del participante              Fecha
Appendix C

Interview Guide

Name of participant:
Date:

Hello Ms./Mrs./Mr. (NAME OD PARTICIPANT) I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview with me. As you know, I am a Ph.D. student at Western Michigan University and the purpose of this interview is to get to know a little bit more about your journey into becoming a teacher from your background as a second-career professional. I will ask you some questions, feel free to expand your answers as much as you need to.

1) Please provide some background about your previous career and the work you used to do.
2) Tell me about your decision to become a teacher. Why did you decide to switch careers?
3) What steps did you take to become a teacher?
4) How does teaching resemble your previous career? How is it different?
5) Tell me about your first day as a teacher. Now, go on to describe your first year(s)
6) What are some experiences that stand out as a way to understand what the transition to becoming a teacher was like for you?
   a. What issues did you encounter as you made the transition to becoming a teacher?
   b. How did you address those issues?
   c. What were the critical moments and experiences in your transition to becoming a teacher?
d. How have those moments and experiences shaped who you function as a teacher today?

7) When you think about your teaching experience from the beginning to now, how would you describe what becoming a teacher has meant for you?
   a. How do you see yourself as a teacher now?
   b. How would you sum up the most important things you have learned about being a teacher?
   c. How do you value the opportunity to be a teacher? Do you think you will remain in the teaching profession? Why or why not?
   d. What are your aspirations for yourself as a teacher in the future?

8) How does reality match or not match their expectations?

9) From your perspective, how would you sum up what it is like to be a novice teacher?

10) What advice do you have for others considering the transition from another career to teaching based on your experience so far?

I want to thank you for your time, and I appreciate you shared these experiences with me.
Appendix D

Post-Interview Reflection Guide

Participant interviewed:

Date:

1. How do I feel the teacher’s behaviors complimented their responses?

2. What visual and verbal cues stood out?

3. What question did the teacher/mentor appear to be most uncomfortable answering?
Appendix E

Stimulated Recalled Interview Guide

Name of participant:

Date:

Hello Ms./Mrs./Mr. (NAME OD PARTICIPANT) I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview with me.

1. What are we going to see today?

2. Let’s start whenever you are ready (watch the video).

After watching the video:

1. What do you see that went well in this lesson?

2. Would you say that you met your teaching goal for that day? Do you feel accomplished?

3. What was a challenge and why?

4. What knowledge from your previous career is visible or can be identified here in this video?

5. In what ways would you say that this lesson is different from previous lessons you taught at the beginning of the school year?

6. What would you like to see next?

I want to thank you for your time, and I appreciate you shared these experiences with me.
Appendix F

HSIRB Letter of Approval

Date: November 29, 2018

To: Regena Nelson, Principal Investigator
    Paula Nunez, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: IRB Project Number 18-10-19

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “First-Year Second-Career Teachers Participating in a Teacher Certification Program: Experiences and Meaning-making of the Transition Process” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., you must request a post-approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study”). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: November 28, 2019