

SUSTAINING PASSION AND PURPOSE IN THE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF VETERAN EDUCATORS

by:
Annie C. Bugay
Teacher I, Limay National High School

Teaching is widely regarded as both a profession and a calling, demanding not only skill but also enduring enthusiasm, patience, and resilience. For veteran educators whose careers span decades, the path is rich with accomplishments, evolving challenges, and moments of transformation. Yet, as time passes, maintaining passion and purpose in their professional journey can become increasingly complex. Shifting curricula, technological advancements, policy changes, and evolving student needs all create a dynamic educational landscape that calls for continuous adaptation. While experienced teachers possess a deep reservoir of wisdom, they still need avenues for learning, renewal, and meaningful engagement. Sustaining their passion and purpose is not merely about avoiding burnout—it involves embracing growth and reaffirming the deeper significance of teaching as a lifelong endeavor.

One essential factor in sustaining veteran educators' dedication is the sense of comfort in the role that develops over years of classroom experience. A recent study conducted by Jefferson, Gray, and Lowe (2024) found that "comfort in the role"—a deep familiarity with the demands and rhythms of teaching—supports veteran teachers in maintaining both their professional identity and enthusiasm. These seasoned educators rely on coping mechanisms and familiar routines that buffer stress and reinforce commitment. Understanding what sustains this comfort can guide school leaders and curriculum developers in supporting veteran teachers more effectively.

Another powerful pathway to sustaining passion is through collaborative and reflective professional growth. Informal professional learning—such as participating in

professional learning communities (PLCs), peer collaboration, mentorship, and reflective dialogue—has consistently emerged as impactful for in-service teacher growth. A systematic review of in-service teachers across global contexts by researchers published in 2024 highlights how these informal learning strategies improve self-efficacy, skill development, and reflective capacity. Teachers engaging in lesson studies, action research, peer collaboration, and mentorship report tangible growth in both confidence and classroom practice.

When veteran educators have opportunities to contribute their expertise while also learning from peers, they reaffirm both their expertise and their capacity for innovation.

Technology and structured supports have also begun to reshape how veteran educators experience professional development. A 2025 integrative review on digital mentoring platforms found that mentoring software significantly enhances traditional mentorship practices. These platforms enable goal-setting, progress tracking, and analytic feedback—bolstering teacher satisfaction, retention, and growth. Although challenges like funding and data privacy remain, this digital layer to mentorship can expand veteran educators' access to professional networks and growth opportunities beyond their schools (Pesina, 2025).

Despite these strengths, veteran teachers face real challenges to sustaining passion and purpose. Burnout, shifting professional expectations, and a sense of being overlooked in systems that foreground standardized metrics can erode motivation. Furthermore, technology can feel alien or overwhelming without targeted support. This underscores the need for supportive environments—schools and systems that value veteran teachers, include them in decision-making, and actively engage their voices. Celebrating veteran educators publicly and involving them as mentors, leaders, and contributors to school culture helps preserve both morale and legacy.

Reflective practice provides another anchor for sustaining purpose. When veteran teachers systematically reflect on their instructional decisions, career journey, and impact, they reconnect with the deeper meaning behind their work. Reflection allows them to adapt to changing contexts while aligning their practice with core values. These reflective habits—whether through journaling, peer dialogue, or mentorship discussions—help veteran educators recognize how their experience continues to shape student success and school communities.

Yet statistical and qualitative research consistently show that communities of practice remain among the most compelling forces for sustaining teachers. PLCs and collaborative structures generate shared purpose, energy, and innovation. As described in educational literature, these communities enable individual and collective growth aligned with shared visions—empowering veteran teachers to remain central to educational progress.

In essence, sustaining passion and purpose among veteran educators involves multiple interlocking supports. Comfort in the role underpins their continued engagement. Informal professional learning, particularly in collaborative forms, revitalizes their sense of possibility. Digital tools like mentoring software expand both access and relevance in development. Reflective practice keeps purpose alive, ensuring veteran teachers remain responsive, creative, and connected with their core motivations. Finally, supportive school cultures that recognize and utilize veteran teachers' strengths are indispensable to ensuring they remain active and inspired contributors to education.

As seasoned educators navigate the later phases of their careers, intentional strategies for growth and renewal are essential—not only for their well-being, but also for the vitality of the entire education system. Sustaining their passion is not optional; it is foundational. When veteran teachers continue to grow, reflect, lead, and collaborate, they not only preserve their own professional fulfillment but also inspire students, shape

school culture, and mentor the next generation of educators. In this way, their ongoing journey enriches both the present and future of teaching.

References:

Jefferson, S., Gray, C., & Lowe, G. (2024). Comfort in the role: The core of positive veteran teachers. *Educ. Sci.*, 14(9), 998. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14090998>

OECD. (2020). Professional growth in times of change: Supporting teachers' continuing professional learning and collaboration. *OECD Education Policy Perspectives*, No. 10. <https://doi.org/10.1787/753eaa89-en>

Pesina, R. (2025). Mentoring software in education and its impact on teacher development: An integrative literature review. *arXiv*. [Manuscript submitted for publication]