Has COVID-19 changed pre-service teachers’ perceptions of the profession? Yes, but not necessarily in bad ways
by Kendra Wells & Lia Daniels

Factors Influencing Teaching Choice: Teaching choice is made up of demands and returns of the profession (Richardson & Watt, 2006).

Pandemic Teaching: Teaching became unpredictable and harder work during the pandemic (Bascia, 2022). Pre-service teachers watched changes from the sidelines. Their perceptions might have changed too.

Research Questions:
1. Reflecting on shifts to the profession resulting from COVID-19, what profiles of career fit (demand/return) characterise pre-service teachers?
2. How do the resultant profiles differ on commitment to the profession, value of school belonging (VoB), teaching efficacy, and career anxiety?

Methods: We administered a survey through a participant pool measuring demand, return, and career outcomes. We recruited 146 pre-service teachers: 104 identified as women; 87 were white.

Analysis:
1. EFA, descriptives, correlation matrix
2. K-means clustering (demand and return)
3. ANOVAs to analyze cluster differences on career outcomes

Although pre-service teachers felt that teaching became harder during the pandemic, they remained committed to the profession.

Cluster Means:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Outcomes</th>
<th>Scale range</th>
<th>Neutral Group</th>
<th>Valued Group</th>
<th>Busy Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commit.</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>8.56</td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>8.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VoB</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Anxiety</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: bold denotes mean difference (p < .05).

Discussion & Implications:
- Demand overall increased, but clusters were characterised by changes to return.
- Although significant cluster differences appeared for VoB and anxiety, commitment and efficacy were equal across clusters, highlighting that changes to demand and return will not worsen the existing teacher shortage.
- Researchers are encouraged to utilise person-centred analyses to obtain a unique perspective of their data.