



www.ualberta.ca

6 – 102 Education North
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G5

Tel: 780: 492-5245
Fax: 780: 492-1318

Data Summary for Exploring Practising Teachers' Feelings and Emotions within the School Environment

August 1, 2013

Dr. Lia Daniels from the University of Alberta and Dr. Rob Klassen from the University of York were interested in examining practicing teachers current motivational beliefs and practices, feelings about the social and emotional aspects of teaching and other aspects of the classroom environment including student behaviour, boredom, assessment, and teachers' professional learning activities. The purpose of this study was to collect quantitative data about practicing teachers' beliefs and practices within the school and classroom environment (e.g. motivation, social-emotional competence, efficacy) and to examine teachers' efficacy and engagement as well as their reported beliefs and practices in a variety of different circumstances.

Self-determination, social-emotional competence and self-efficacy all have roles to play in the classroom practices that preservice teachers intend to implement when they move into the real-world teaching environment. Previous research (Daniels et al., 2012; Radil et al., 2012) has shown that preservice teachers have good intentions in what they intend to do but that these intentions break down once they move into practice. We are interested in seeing if there are relationships between variables such as teaching efficacy, engagement, and specific classroom practices among practicing teachers from a range of backgrounds and school environments. Additionally, we are interested in seeing if relationships exist between practicing teachers' beliefs and actual practices, eventually hoping to compare these beliefs and intentions with those of preservice teachers who have not yet begun their teaching careers (though this is outside the scope of the current project). Overall, we are interested in exploring the beliefs that practicing teachers hold about the classroom environment, what they actually do in that same environment and what relationships exist between their classroom beliefs and practices across domains related to the school environment.

The data presented here were collected from the Greater Edmonton Teachers Convention Associations' (GETCA) annual Teachers' Convention on February 28 and March 1, 2013. If a teacher showed interest in the study, s/he was provided with a clipboard and one copy of the 3-page survey (front and back) to complete (in addition to demographic information) on-site. Trained research assistants administered the one-time survey, which took between 5 and 15 minutes to complete.

Summary and descriptive statistics are available representing a brief overview of the initial findings. I hope that they provide useful information and reflect the scope of the data we were able to collect this year. If you would like further information please contact: Dr. Lia Daniels, principal investigator at lia.daniels@ualberta.ca

Exploring Practising Teachers' Feelings and Emotions Data Summary

Project: Exploring Practising Teachers' Feelings and Emotions within the School Environment (Winter 2013)

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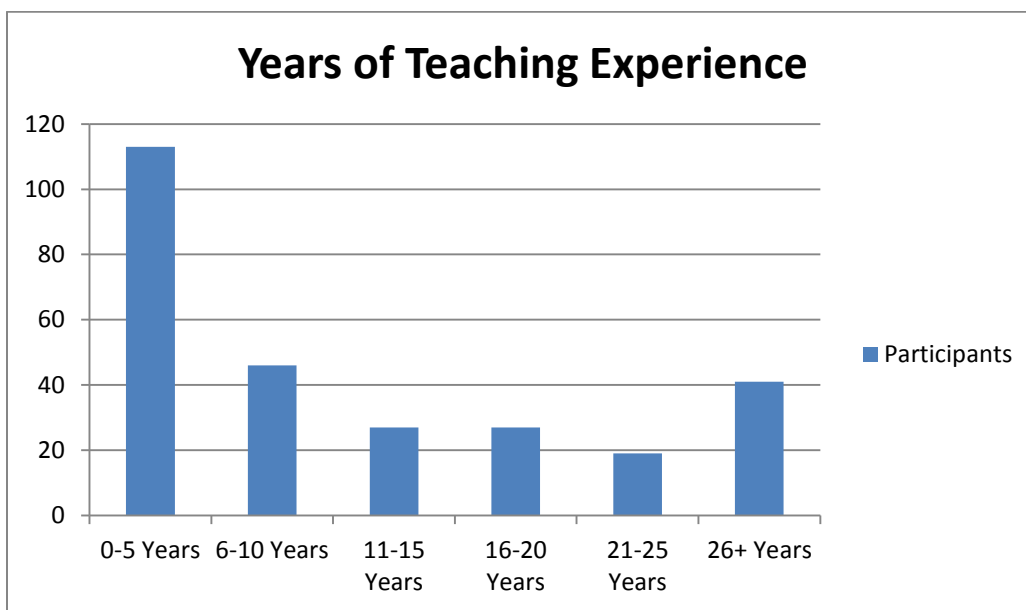
1. Demographic Information

Sample Size: N = 276

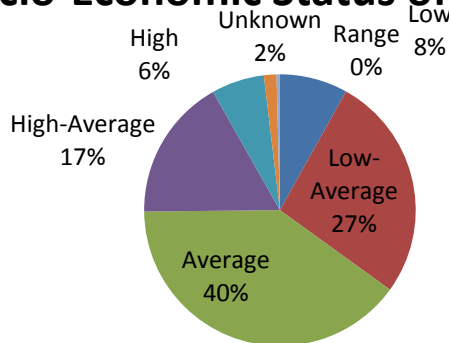
Gender: 28.3% male; 71.7% female

Level of teaching: 42% elementary school, 42% secondary school, 14% range of schools

Average Number of Students in Class: M=24.6, SD=6.63 (minimum=1, maximum=45)



Socio-Economic Status of Schools

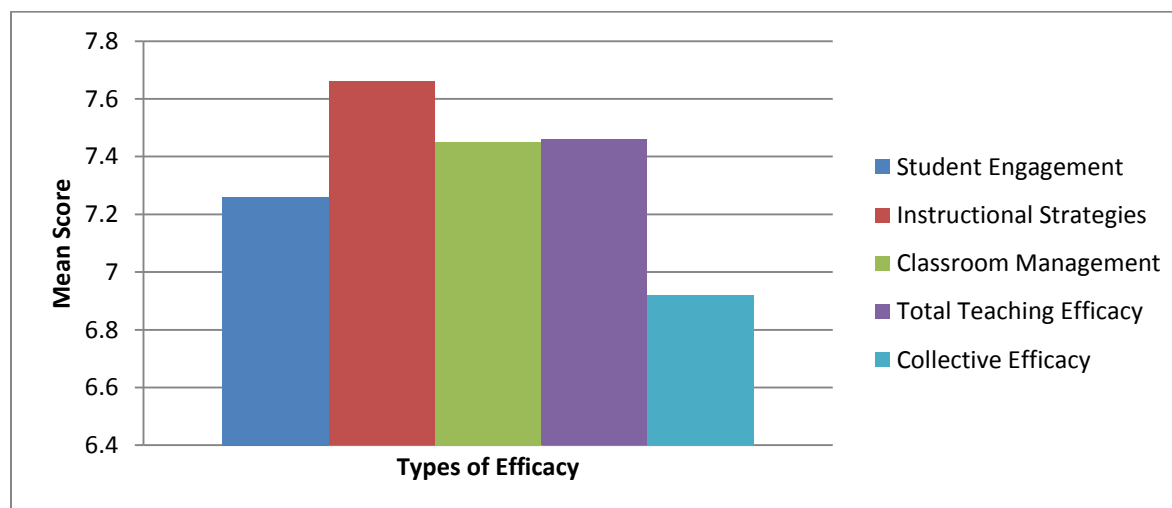


2. Teacher Efficacy and Collective Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is strongly associated with teacher motivation, which in turn influences student outcomes. Self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to carry out a particular course of action (Bandura, 1997). Researchers are finding that teachers' self-efficacy influences their teaching behaviors and their students' motivation and achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Teachers with low self-efficacy experience greater difficulties in teaching, higher levels of job-related stress and lower levels of job satisfaction (Klassen et al., 2009). Our self-efficacy measure focused on general teaching beliefs, and was based on Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale.

Teachers' collective efficacy has been deemed a neglected construct in educational research, with most motivation research focused on beliefs about individual factors, such as self-efficacy, that influence teacher and student behavior. Collective efficacy beliefs reflect teachers' perceptions of school-level attributes; that is, judgments of the capabilities of the staff or school to which they belong. Research has shown that teachers' collective efficacy is related to student achievement and academic climate, even after controlling for prior student achievement and demographic characteristics, such as socioeconomic status (e.g. Klassen et al., 2008). Therefore, we included a measure of collective efficacy based on Goddard and Goddard (2001).

In our sample, teachers all have relatively high levels of teacher self-efficacy across domains (student engagements, instructional strategies and classroom management). They do report feeling less efficacious in being able to engage students, suggesting an area for future intervention. Generally, teachers report feeling that they are able to meet the demands of their teaching environments. Interestingly, when we ask similar questions about the abilities of their colleagues to do these same things, they report feeling less certain that the entire school community is able to meet the demands of the teaching environment.



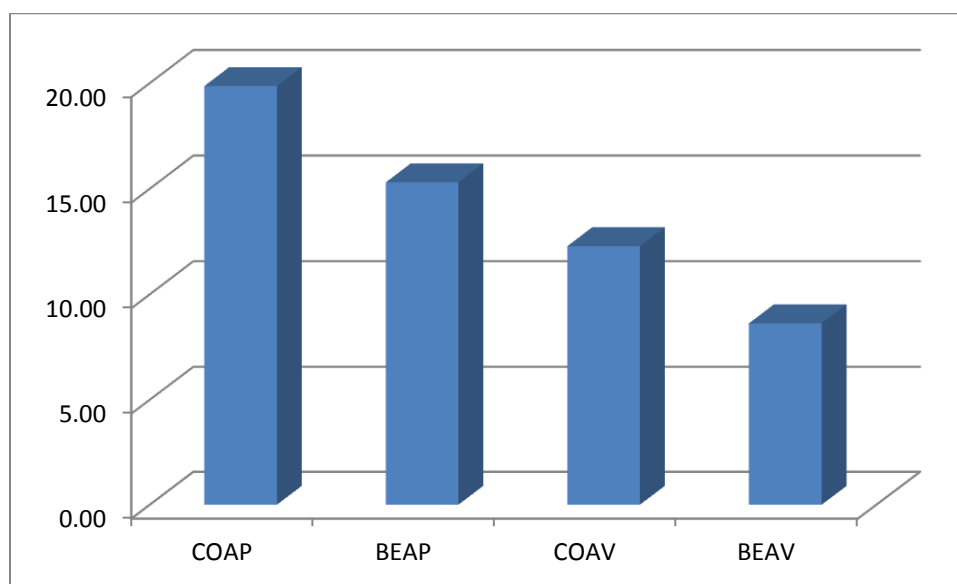
3. Autonomy Support

Autonomy, often identified as the most important psychological need (Deci & Ryan, 2008), is the need to feel in control of one's action or the ability to act volitionally, with a sense of choice and agency (Deci & Ryan, 2007; Faye & Sharpe, 2008). Autonomy support in the classroom has been extensively researched and a great deal of literature supports this as an adaptive motivating style for educators to adopt. Indeed, Supporting autonomy in education leads to better conceptual understanding of topics, more curious, competent students, higher self esteem, greater persistence and better quality learning (Niemi & Ryan, 2011). In previous research (Radil, Daniels & Wagner, 2013), we have found that preservice teachers have very good intentions in terms of being autonomy supportive once they move into the classroom. We were interested in seeing if this pattern holds for practicing teachers as they have real-world experience in a variety of teaching situations and may have had experiences that lead them to incorporate different practices into their teaching styles.

Teachers' self-reported mean for creating an autonomy-supportive environment in the classroom was 6.19 ($SD=.55$); they report being quite autonomy-supportive in the classroom. It is important to consider that this is a self-report measure and does not measure actual practices. In addition, our data for teachers' self-reported autonomy-support was negatively skewed with a skewness ratio of -4.26, which means that the distribution of scores was significantly skewed. We had a build up of very high scores on the positive end. One possible explanation for this finding is that we are seeing ceiling effects in our data; there may not be sufficient positive (e.g. agreement) options for participants to meaningfully distinguish between those presented.

4. Boredom

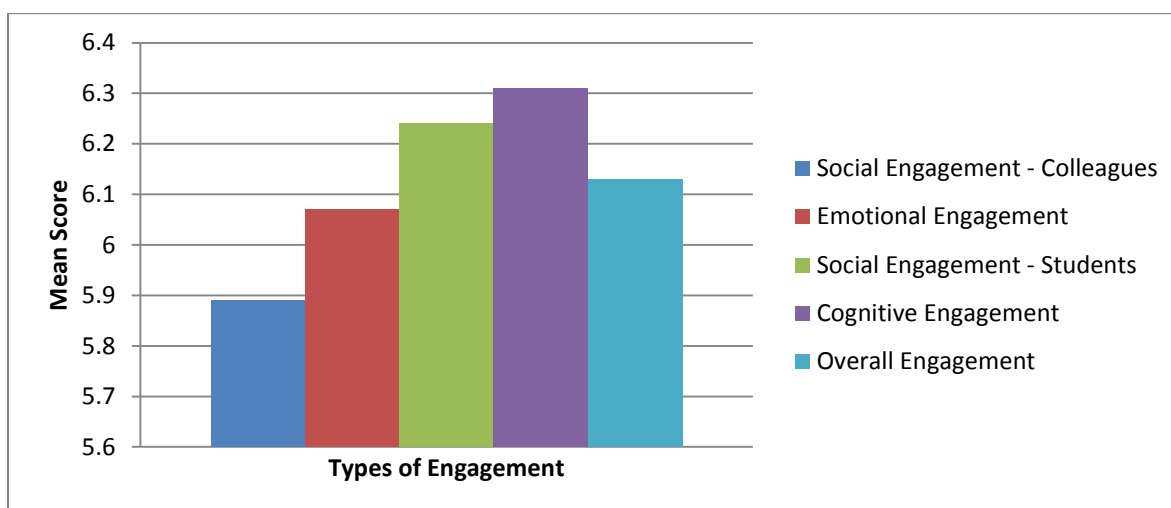
Teachers generally preferred their students to cope with boredom by reappraising situations (COAP), followed by requesting for an alternative learning task/topic that students were interested in (BEAP). By contrast, teachers were least preferred to see students coping with boredom by physically disengaging from learning (COAV).



5. Engagement

Building an understanding of teachers' engagement is vital: initial research has shown that engaged teachers display higher teaching performance (Bakker & Bal, 2010), and teachers' engagement may translate into students' engagement (Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007). Since researchers (e.g., Pianta et al., 2012) propose that teacher-student relationships may play the primary role in fostering student engagement and positive student outcomes, we used a recently developed and validated Engaged Teacher Scale (ETS; Klassen, Yerdelen, & Durksen, 2013). The ETS is a 16-item, 4-factor scale of teacher engagement (cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, social engagement: students, and social engagement: colleagues).

In our data, teachers reported that they are least engaged with their colleagues and most cognitively engaged with their work. They do report that they are socially engaged with their students, which is encouraging to see. However, it is fairly clear that teachers' engagement in the school is being influenced by the fact that they are least engaged with their colleagues. This may be an area that warrants follow up.



6. Professional Learning

Efficacy beliefs are influenced by teachers' interpretations of professional development opportunities (Martin, McCaughtry, Hodges-Kulinna, & Cothran, 2008; Palmer, 2011; Zambo & Zambo, 2008). However, the relationship between professional learning and teacher efficacy is complex, and efficacy beliefs are both a product of experiences (e.g., self-efficacy is raised by effective professional learning experiences) and a constructor of experiences (teachers with high self-efficacy approach professional learning experiences more positively and confidently (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Few studies have examined how teachers' professional learning experiences are associated with school-level collective efficacy beliefs. In order to further the study of professional learning, we included two open-ended items: one related to teacher efficacy and one related to collective efficacy. The following questions and quotations are representative of teachers have told us about their professional learning experiences.

What professional learning activity has most boosted **your confidence in your ability** to enhance student learning? Why?:

- *“Collaboration with colleagues is the most effective way for me to improve my confidence.”*
- *“Sessions that make me reflect on my teaching practice.”*
- *“I feel confident in my ability to teach. I feel overwhelmed by the load of professional learning activities that we are expected to do. I feel that many of these activities take away from my time and attention in the classroom.”*
- *“Working with a mentor teacher who is organized, knowledgeable and skilled.”*

What professional learning activity has most boosted **your confidence in your school’s ability** to enhance student learning? Why?:

- *“Staff meetings – we come up with great ideas together and complete them as a team.”*
- *“Multi-school collaborative PD.”*
- *“Our department performed a self-audit and started linking our teaching practice to curriculum through blueprinting our tests. This provided an extra foundation and reflection on our alignment with curricular outcomes.”*
- *“Development of Professional Learning Communities to encourage collaboration.”*
- *“Interestingly, none. The PD we’ve had is out of touch with our specific concerns, and is often a top-down approach from the district.”*

Interestingly, we heard a lot about collaboration being important, both for increasing teachers’ confidence in their own ability to enhance student learning and in their confidence in their schools’ ability to enhance student learning. This may demonstrate the importance of relationships to teachers and the fact that a lot of the change in practices may be facilitated through relationships. It also suggests an interesting area for future research: collaborative professional learning.