

Guest editorial

Motivation for teaching

1. Aim and scope of the special issue

Researchers from different parts of the world, often from diverse fields and theoretical orientations, begin to contemplate similar issues creating a *Zeitgeist* of interest that other researchers quickly recognise as important. It is at this point that the research community also simultaneously looks upon the “new” direction as an almost obvious pathway to take and wonders why it has taken us so long to get there. Such is the case with this special issue which focuses on motivational theories in relation to the domain of teaching. We bring together researchers from around the world who are interested in motivations related to teaching, from commencing teacher education candidates through to experienced teachers. Our agenda has been shaped by discussions among the contributors, several of whom presented earlier versions of their papers at the 2005 EARLI Conference in Cyprus. By bringing these researchers together within the special issue, we aim to elaborate the theoretical stances developed by each, and present robust empirical findings based on each of their perspectives.

It is our contention that motivational theories have insufficiently informed the existing literature related to teaching motivations. Collectively, these studies draw on extant motivational theories to demonstrate how they can be fruitfully applied to the context of teaching. Motivational frameworks encompassed in this volume include expectancy-value theory (Study 1 by Watt & Richardson), goal theory (Study 3 by Malmberg; Study 4 by Butler & Shibaz), and interest and self-determination theories (Study 5 by Kunter, Tsai, Klusmann, Brunner, Krauss, & Baumert). As well, Study 2 (by Kieschke & Schaarschmidt) is grounded in the health and personality psychology literature.

The five invited empirical studies illuminate issues concerning career choice among teachers, the complexities during teaching, and important factors that impact on the development of teachers and their students. The theoretical background of the articles shows their relevance to current theories of motivation and their expansion to include teaching motivation, thus constituting a major step forward in the field. Empirical data are not limited to one particular cultural context, but derive from a range of cultural settings; sophisticated methodological approaches adopted in the five empirical studies allow the authors to bring to the fore new, robust and reliable findings. This special issue concludes with two commentaries on the contributions of the five studies from very well-known experts in the field. Consequently, our special issue will be an important contributor to setting the agenda for future research in this area.

2. Settings and methods

Together, studies span prospective teachers from their entry until their exit from teacher education (Studies 1 and 3), as well as practising teachers (Studies 2, 4 and 5), and their students (Studies 4 and 5). The contributors draw on samples from Australia, Finland, Germany and Israel, and although there are noticeable differences between these samples from the different countries, it would appear that there are also important similarities which resonate across these beginning and experienced teachers.

The longitudinal and multimodal designs which are adopted across the studies, constitute important methodological advances in our endeavours to research teacher motivation. The first three studies are based on longitudinal data – throughout teacher education (Studies 1 and 3) and among teachers already having entered the profession (Study 2). These longitudinal data allow the authors to draw strong conclusions regarding outcomes for different teacher types (Studies 1 and 2), and regarding the progression of motivations through teacher education studies (Study 3). The next

two studies (Studies 4 and 5) incorporate student measures to supplement the data which come from teacher participants, and are consequently able to actually relate teacher motivations to their students' perceptions and behaviours.

The studies adopt a mix of variable-centred and person-centred analytic approaches. These include typological analyses to identify different *types* of prospective (Study 1) and practising teachers (Study 2), latent growth curve analyses to trace the developmental *trajectories* for preservice teachers' goals and their associated outcomes (Study 3), hierarchical linear models to examine the *associations* between practising teachers' goals and their students' reports of positive vs. negative instructional practices (Study 4), and hierarchical structural equation models to investigate relationships between teacher enthusiasm and quality instructional behaviour as reported by the teachers and their students (Study 5).

3. Overview of the studies

Major contributions may best be considered in relation to three “sets” among the studies: those which examine *types* of beginning or practising teachers (Studies 1 and 2), the study which traces the trajectories for preservice teachers' learning goal orientations throughout teacher education (Study 3), and those which investigate the implications of practising teachers' motivations for their teaching-related behaviours and student outcomes (Studies 4 and 5).

The first set of two papers provides an important contribution to the existing literature by focusing on different teacher types. Such typological approaches move beyond normative trends to focus on substantively interesting subgroups, whose functioning may not be represented at all by the average. In the first study, we identified different profiles of beginning teachers in Australia, which resonate with those identified in the second study of practising teachers in Germany. Our first study showed that different types exist even among beginning teachers, which have explanatory power in terms of their initial motivations, and exert a powerful influence on how long they plan to remain in the profession. Identification of a “highly engaged switcher” type, who plan to teach only in the short term despite high levels of professional engagement, will be of particular interest to both teacher educators and recruitment authorities in relation to succession planning during the current climate of teacher shortages. Our findings also suggest clear directions for improved mentoring and support for beginning teachers.

Study 2 revealed robust profiles of practising teachers' occupational engagement and individual coping capacity, and their relationships with well-being. The four identified types provide a powerful heuristic in terms of understanding teachers' psychological health and professional commitment. These findings provide important indications concerning how to promote teacher health and well-being, especially for the “at risk” teacher types, and how to adequately prepare teachers to deal with the stressors and challenges inherent in teaching.

The third study involves longitudinal data from a sample of Finland—Swedish teacher education students, from degree entry through to their degree completion. Mastery goal orientations were found to relate to positive teaching-relevant outcomes, while performance goal orientations related to task-irrelevant behaviours. Reassuringly then, mastery goals increased most over the course of teacher education, and performance goals increased too, although to a lesser extent. All goals peaked during the third year of teacher education, coincident with concentrated periods of teaching practicum. It is theoretically interesting that both performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals exhibited rather similar patterns, unlike previous studies which have focused on other student populations, raising questions concerning how these prospective teachers' goal orientations may continue to develop following their entry into the teaching profession. The fact that the performance goals increased during the major teaching practicum period reinforces the need for support and a close nexus between teacher education programs and schools, while teacher education candidates negotiate their emergent teaching identities.

The final two studies examined the motivations of practising teachers and their behavioural consequences for both teachers and students. Study 4 presents the first attempt to define and measure goal orientations among practising teachers, and shows that goal theory can be applied to the context of teaching as an achievement domain. Critically, teachers' mastery goals related to student reports of positive instructional practices, while conversely, performance-avoidance goals related to student reports of negative instructional practices. These findings for teacher mastery goals resonate strongly with the findings from Study 3, although the findings for teacher performance goals do not. In Study 4, only teacher performance-avoidance goals showed negative consequences, also in line with findings from previous research involving student populations. This contrast highlights the need to chart how teacher goals develop through the course of teacher education and beyond, as well as the contextual conditions that shape positive mastery goals for teachers.

The final study also examined how teacher motivations relate to student outcomes. Study 5 focused on how teachers' enthusiasm is related to their quality instructional behaviours, as perceived by themselves and by their students. Positive relationships were identified, highlighting the importance of enthusiasm as a characteristic of effective teachers. Important policy implications (particularly in combination with the findings of Study 2) concern the critical need to identify and address the varied sources of teachers' disaffection and disengagement.

4. Conclusions and implications

Studies within this special issue draw upon relevant and important motivational lenses and develop them in relation to teachers — in their choice of career, during teacher education studies, and when they are professional teachers. Collectively, we invoke diverse theoretical lenses, and utilise a range of sophisticated methodological approaches with which to examine and interpret empirical data gathered in the cultural settings of Australia, Germany, Finland and Israel.

Collectively, the five studies offer three powerful and over-arching theoretical contributions. First, existing motivational theories offer well-established and comprehensive frameworks, which can be fruitfully applied to the question of how individuals approach the complexities, challenges, disappointments and rewards within the domain of teaching as a career. Second, teacher motivations matter in terms of their own plans and behaviours, psychological health and well-being, *and* their students' instructional perceptions and behaviours. Third, teacher motivations are influential from the outset of their entry to teacher education, are formed and fashioned through the course of their teacher education studies, and continue to play out across their teaching careers.

The special issue is drawn to a close with the commentaries from distinguished researchers, Patricia Alexander and Anita Woolfolk Hoy. Both commentators in unique ways confirm the importance and complexity of teacher motivation, and the important insights derived from exploring its influence for those undertaking teacher education as well as those who have already entered the profession. They point to the contributions of the special issue in making a theoretical contribution, while simultaneously directing attention to the complexities of teaching, the influential role of motivation in relation to teacher health and well-being, and the complex ways it affects student perceptions and behaviours. In these ways, our special issue invites new research agenda concerning motivation and its impacts for teachers who are situated within a range of sociocultural settings.

Helen M.G. Watt^{*1}

Paul W. Richardson^{**1}

*Faculty of Education, Monash University,
Melbourne, Victoria 3800, Australia*

*Corresponding author. Tel.: +613 9905 3276; fax: +613 9905 5400.

**Corresponding author. Tel.: +613 9905 2771; fax: +613 9905 5400.

E-mail addresses: helen.watt@education.monash.edu.au (H.M.G. Watt),
paul.richardson@education.monash.edu.au (P.W. Richardson)

¹ Both the authors contributed equally to this editorial.