Investigating pre-service teacher motivation across cultures using the Teachers' Ten Statements Test

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ABSTRACT

Motivations for choosing teaching as a career were investigated in 200 pre-service teachers from Canada and Oman. We used a novel structured qualitative approach and two theoretical models to analyze how pre-service teacher career-choice motivation varied according to cultural context. The results of the study showed that Canadian participants made more self-references, and expressed higher levels of individual-focused motivation and social utility value as career motivators than did Omani participants. Participants from Oman expressed greater endorsement of teaching as a fallback career and higher levels of socio-cultural influences than Canadian participants. Results extend teacher motivation "teacher motivation theory" by investigating socio-cultural influences.

Do motives for teaching vary according to cultural context? This study probes the motivation to teach of pre-service teachers in two countries—Canada and Oman—with contrasting educational, cultural, religious, and social contexts. We used a novel structured qualitative approach to examine pre-service teachers' motivation for teaching, and Watt and Richardson's model of beginning teacher motivation (2007), along with Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions (2001) to frame our interpretation of the results. The innovative contributions of this study are the use of a structured qualitative approach of measuring teacher motivation (the Teachers' Ten Statements Test [TTST]), and the examination of pre-service teacher motivation in two settings that offer sufficient contrast to highlight differences associated with cultural context. At the heart of this research is the question of the universality of motivations for teaching across cultural contexts. Our own recent research shows that although individual measures of motivation beliefs (e.g., teachers' self-efficacy) may operate in similar ways across diverse countries (e.g., in Canada, Cyprus, Korea, Singapore, and the United States; Klassen et al., 2009), the relationships among key motivation variables may vary as a function of culture and cultural beliefs (e.g., Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010). Furthermore, findings from purely quantitative approaches to cross-cultural teacher motivation research may mask culture-based differences that are more readily apparent when mixed methods or qualitative approaches are used (e.g., Klassen et al., 2008). The current study extends understanding of teacher motivation by using a structured qualitative approach to investigate pre-service teachers' motives for teaching in Canada and Oman.

Understanding the motivation beliefs of pre-service teachers is an international concern, and recent studies have examined pre-service teachers' motivation in Australia (Watt & Richardson, 2007), Brunei (Yong, 1995), Canada (Klassen & Chiu, 2010), the United Kingdom (Malmberg & Hagger, 2009), and the United States (Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008). However, most pre-service teacher motivation research has been conducted in single cultural settings using quantitative approaches, resulting in limitations such as restricted definitions of pre-service teacher motivation, risks of unexamined assumptions about pre-service teacher motivation, response biases inherent in cross-cultural survey research, questions about the generalizability of findings, and risks of western-dominated understandings of motivation in non-western settings (Klassen, 2004; Sternberg, 2004). Examining pre-service teacher motivation in culturally contrasting settings expands global understanding of this construct, and begins to answer questions

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about the universality or culture specificity of the motivations behind teachers' choice of career.

In the current study, teachers' motivation is defined as a broad construct that captures the processes that account for the creation and maintenance of career choice and career continuance (Katzell & Thompson, 1990). A common finding of early studies of beginning pre-service and beginner teacher motivation is that new teachers (typically in western settings) are motivated to teach for personal satisfaction (especially related to working with children) and social rewards (e.g., Willcox & Beigel, 1953). More recently, Watt and Richardson (2007, 2008) investigated pre-service teacher motivation in Australia, and found that intrinsic value of teaching, social utility value, and perceived teaching ability ranked as the strongest influences on the choice of teaching as a career. Researchers and policy-makers are interested in understanding teachers' motivation due to the belief that motivation is linked to teaching quality, engagement, and commitment to the profession (e.g., de Jesus & Lens, 2005); furthermore, the links between teachers' motivation and teaching quality are beginning to be found across a range of cultures (OECD, 2005). Interest in pre-service teachers' work-related motivation beliefs is strong because teachers, perhaps more than most other professional groups, are prone to a lack of occupational motivation (de Jesus & Lens, 2005). Recent studies show that new teachers' low commitment to the profession is reflected by high attrition rates (Jalongo & Heider, 2006). Attrition rates are higher for new teachers than for experienced teachers in most countries (OECD, 2005), with levels and rates of attrition typically declining as teachers increase in experience.

Motivations for entering teaching may be influenced by the pathways that individuals follow to enter the profession, but also by cultural and contextual factors. Boyd et al. (2006) noted the complexity of the relationship among teachers' individual characteristics (such as academic ability and prior experience), preparation pathways (such as conventional and alternative academic preparation and field experiences), state and district requirements for certification, and outcomes such as teacher effectiveness and student learning. The pathways followed by teachers are inter-related with motives for entering the profession, and together the pathway into teaching and individual motivation profiles influence outcomes for teachers and students in the classrooms. However, little is known about how different pathways into teaching influence teachers' effectiveness and student learning (Boyd et al., 2006), and even less is known about how pre-service teachers' motives for entering the profession vary across cultural settings. Examining similarities and differences of pre-service teacher motivation across cultural settings allows for (a) testing or extending the generalizability of existing theories and frameworks, (b) discovering variations in motivations that occur across cultural settings, and (c) integrating contrasting findings in order to generate a more universal understanding of why pre-service teachers enter the profession. Examining pre-service teachers' motivation across cultures reduces researcher ethnocentrism by providing insight into a wider range of motivation factors than is possible by examining teachers from a single cultural setting.

Unfortunately, examining pre-service teacher motivation across cultures using existing quantitative measures presents conceptual and measurement complications. Quantitative approaches to cross-cultural research may mask important differences or similarities, and are prone to problematic findings due to construct bias (e.g., omission of culturally relevant factors), method bias (e.g., differences in response styles), and content bias (e.g., differences in relevance of item content; van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Most pre-service teacher motivation research has used quantitative approaches: Brookhart and Freeman's (1992) review of pre-service teacher motivation found that an over-reliance on quantitative

survey measures resulted in a limited exploration of participant characteristics and a restricted view of the range of motivation beliefs of pre-service teachers. The authors identified a need for theory-guided studies that moved away from reliance on fixed-choice surveys, and that involved comparisons of various groups and subgroups. The current study addresses the problems raised by Brookhart and Freeman (1992) and van de Vijver and Leung (1997) by examining pre-service teachers' motivation in Canada and Oman using a structured qualitative approach guided by clear theoretical frameworks.

1. Theoretical frameworks

The current study investigates Canadian and Omani pre-service teachers' motivation using two theoretical frameworks: Watt and Richardson's FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teacher Choice) model (2007, 2008) that explores motivation for teaching, and Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions (2001).

1.1. Watt and Richardson's FIT-choice theory

The FIT-Choice theoretical framework for teacher motivation is based in expectancy-value theory, and relates teachers' success expectations and task valuations to career choices in education. Expectancy-value theory proposes that people are motivated to act when they have expectancy for success, i.e., *Can I do this*? coupled with a valuing of the likely outcome, i.e., *Do I want to do this*? (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Watt and Richardson (2007) propose that beliefs about expectancy/ability, perceptions of task value, and perceived task difficulty influence the choices that new and experienced teachers make about their work. Their FIT-Choice framework proposes 12 factors that comprise motivations for teaching, with five stand-alone factors, and two composite themes consisting of seven factors (see Table 1 for descriptions of the factors and themes, with examples). The five stand-alone motivation factors include teaching ability, intrinsic career value, perception of teaching as a fallback career, prior teaching and learning experiences, and social influences. The personal utility value composite theme includes job security, time for family, and job transferability. The social utility composite theme includes shaping the future of students, enhancing social equity, making a social contribution, and working with children and adolescents. Watt and Richardson propose that these 12 factors provide an empirically-derived and theoretically strong framework on which to build research into teacher motivation. Although Watt and Richardson (2008) have linked certain background characteristics (SES, English language background, age) to teaching motivations, they have not reported explorations of how teaching motivation operates in contrasting cultural settings.

1.2. Hofstede's cultural dimensions

The current research also builds on the theoretical framework provided by Hofstede's theory of cultural values and dimensions. Hofstede and McCrae (2004) defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group or category of people from another" (p. 58), with the understanding that culture is collective, not individual; observable in behaviors, but not directly visible; and common to some, but not all people in a country or region. Cultural values influence behavior across domains, and "serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity" (Schwartz, 1994, p. 21). Although individual variation exists within countries, cultural values are linked more strongly to one's country than to religion, employer organization, or individual personality (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Cross-national