

Canadian Teachers' Learning Practices and Workload Issues: Results from a National Teacher Survey and Follow-Up Focus Groups

Authors: Harry Smaller, Paul Tarc, Fabrizio Antonelli, Rosemary Clark, Doug Hart, and David Livingstone

Abstract:

In October 2003, approximately 2000 randomly sampled elementary and secondary teachers from across Canada were sent English language questionnaire forms, inquiring into their practices and opinions concerning their own on-going learning. Respondents were asked to comment on any informal learning they may have done in the past year in their workplaces, their homes and their communities. They were also asked to report on any formal learning activities in which they participated including courses, workshops and conferences. Most questions replicated those asked in a similar survey undertaken in 1998 survey, and also followed closely questions which were asked of Canadian adults generally, in national telephone surveys conducted in 1998 and again in 2003. In total, 1024 useable responses were received, for an overall response rate of almost 50%. During the spring of 2004, eight focus groups were conducted in three provinces, to explore in more depth, issues raised in the national survey. In January 2005, a second round of focus groups was initiated, beginning with two groups conducted in Vancouver.

From the national survey, over 90% of all teachers indicated that they had engaged in formal courses and workshops in the previous year. Similarities and differences among teachers' responses are examined based on differences of gender, age, region, elementary/secondary school placement, urban/rural residence, and position in the system. Full-time teachers reported spending an average of about 8 hours per week engaged in their formal learning activity (including course time, reading and preparing assignments). In addition to this formal learning, teachers reported that they also spent an average of about 4 hours per week in informal learning in their workplaces, and an overall average of about 11 hours per week devoted to informal learning activities generally (related to their employment, housework, community volunteer work and other general interests). From the focus group interviews, a number of themes emerged suggesting that social and material conditions in the workplace, school curriculum and program change, policies of local school boards and provincial governments, and family responsibilities intersected significantly with how teachers engage in both formal and informal learning.

Although full-time teachers reported only a slight increase in average weekly hours of work as compared to the 1998 (49 vs 48 hours), a significant finding of the national survey, and unanimously commented upon by every focus group participant, was the perception that teacher workloads have increased dramatically in the past five years. 81% of teachers also reported an increase or a significant increase in stress on the job. Reasons for these findings are discussed in the paper.

INTRODUCTION/THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

This paper constitutes the third in a series, produced from an ongoing empirical research program with teachers across Canada, which began in 1997. The first paper (Smaller et al., 2000) described the results of an initial 1998 questionnaire survey of approximately 1500 randomly sampled teachers working in public elementary and secondary schools across Canada. The second paper (Smaller et al 2001) was developed from more qualitative follow-up studies undertaken in 1999 and 2000 with smaller groups of teachers in Ontario. The data sets analyzed were 24 hour/day, week-long diary logs kept by teachers themselves, and in-depth telephone interviews conducted subsequently with some of these teachers. In each case, teachers were canvassed about issues relating to their own informal and formal learning, and the intersections of this learning with workplace issues and government policy and programs related to professional development more specifically.

From the outset in 1997, three distinct, but related, themes have served to underlie this study, as well as informing and directing it. Seven years later, all three of these themes remain as dominant in the discourse and realities of public schooling as they were then (if not more so); therefore, some reiteration of comments made in the initial 2000 report seems appropriate, along with drawing upon more recent literature, events and trends, where useful.¹

Schooling “reform” and “restructuring” - There is no question that both the discourse and the reality of *change* continue to dominate most aspects of the schooling agenda today. To be sure, demands (whether popular, political and/or academic) for schooling reform have been in place almost from the inception of state schooling itself, as critical educational historians on several continents have long since noted (Katz, 1974; Prentice, 1975; Curtis, 1988; Gardner, 1984; Spaul 1997). These pressures for change have often historically been based (at least by dominant voices) on the “need” for schooling to be linked more closely to the economic “wants” and “needs” of the nation (Althouse, 1929; Royal Commission on Education, 1950; Goodman, 1995), a call which has certainly not diminished in the past decade. In fact, one could certainly argue that schooling reform is now linked even more closely to transformations in the larger political economy of provinces and nations—a movement consistent with globalizing, neo-liberal economic trends, including tighter control over, but less funding for, public sector social institutions (Ranson, 2003; Carnoy and Rhoten, 2002; Dale and Robertson, 2002). Students and school systems are increasingly being pressured to be more “competitive” in the global (education) market. These pressures intensify in spite of increasing evidence that such connections between education, employment opportunities, and national advantage are not necessarily empirically valid (see for example “Education is No Protection,” Herbert, 2004).

More specifically, while the recent (demands for) reforms in education continue to range across the many dimensions of schooling—funding, governance, curriculum, resources, facilities, etc.—teachers themselves seem to have been singled out for special attention,

¹ Funding for the first phase of the project (1997-2002) was provided by the SSHRC-funded New Approaches to Life-Long Learning Research Network and by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation and all of its provincial affiliates. Funding for the second phase of this project [2002-2007] is provided solely by the SSHRC-funded [WALL]

in unprecedented ways. Traditionally, teachers have typically been addressed as an entity, and improvements to education were often associated with the need to improve conditions for teachers collectively—class sizes, resources, salaries, benefits, pensions and job security. Even where teachers were seen to be in need of further education themselves, governments at various levels often moved to expand and improve teacher education programs, and/or to offer incentives for teachers to engage in further study, whether in pre-service or in-service models (Hopkins, 1969; Robinson, 1971; Fleming, 1972).

In the past two decades, there has been a dramatic shift from this more collective approach to one of individualization. This theme dominates the ways in which teachers' work is being restructured and controlled (see, for example, "Modernizing Schooling Through Performance Management: A Critical Appraisal," Gleeson and Husbands, 2003, and "Edu-business: Are Teachers Working in a New World?" Mahony et al, 2003). Moreover individualization is equally as dominant in the ways in which teachers are increasingly being educated, trained, evaluated and tested. (Holmes Group, 1990; Labaree, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Darling-Hammond, and Ball, 1998; OECD, 1998; Ontario Government, 2000).

Often, these initiatives are being promoted through a rhetoric of a "need" for increased professionalism. In at least two jurisdictions (British Columbia and Ontario) government-initiated and controlled "colleges of teachers" have been established, with a mandate to control the training, certification and practice of teachers (Popkewitz, 1994; Ontario Government, 1995). In many areas of the USA, salaries, promotion, and even basic job tenure for individual teachers are increasingly being determined by teacher testing regimes, increased external evaluation of teacher practice, and/or by student "scores" on standardized examinations (OSSTF, 1999). While these measures have yet to gain a foothold in Canada, in at least one province (Ontario), student results from external examinations now appear in the public press, displayed on a school-by-school basis. The implications for individual teachers in these schools seem certainly clear.

In addition to these new controls over teachers' classroom practice, there have also been increasing calls for introducing compulsory "professional development" programs for teachers, and the closely-related phenomenon of regular, and compulsory, teacher re-certification programs (Ontario Government, 1999). While few teachers, and none of their unions and associations, argue against the need for, and benefits of, ongoing professional development, questions are rightfully posed about the intentions behind and practices of such state-initiated and controlled interventions. Who would be involved in the development and implementation of these programs? What would be the assumptions made about necessary or important knowledge? Would such assumptions be based, and built, upon existing teacher knowledge, or otherwise? These are not trivial questions. In fact, a compulsory province-wide in-service teacher professional development program introduced unilaterally by a Conservative government in Ontario in 1999 was found so odious to teachers in the province that an official boycott was implemented almost immediately by all of the province's teacher unions, and certainly served to mobilize teachers to campaign successfully against the government in the ensuing provincial election in 2003. Not surprisingly, the new Liberal government was quick to announce the demise of the program, and to make a promise to work with teachers to develop an alternative.

Teacher Knowledge - In this light, the second underlying theme informing this study is reflected in the increased interest among educational researchers about this concept of "teacher knowledge." This research has taken a number of directions in recent years, including explorations about what it is, what it should be, how it is acquired and/or enhanced, and the nature of its relation to student and school success (Briscoe, 1997; Klein, 1996; Gibson and Olberg, 1998; Donmoyer, 1995; Ontario College of Teachers, 1999). Although there is large and increasing volume of literature covering these themes, to date there has been little attention paid to how teachers themselves see these matters personally - what they think is important to know and to learn, how they would like to engage in this learning process, and what they are already doing in this regard.

Informal Learning - Finally, this study has been motivated, and informed, by the concept of "informal learning" - the ways in which learning is undertaken outside of formal structures of classes and courses, instructors and regulations. Although informal learning and formal learning are distinct categories in this research, this study also aims to illuminate how these two modes inter-relate and might be structured to better support each other. While much human learning clearly takes place incidentally, another important category in the overall spectrum of knowledge acquisition is that informal learning which is deliberate and sustained. This learning can take place either alone or collectively. As David Livingstone points out, *informal learning* is

...any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs outside the curricula of institutions providing educational programs, courses or workshops. . . .Explicit informal learning is distinguished from everyday perceptions, general socialization and more tacit informal learning by peoples' own conscious identification of the activity as significant learning. The important criteria that distinguish explicit informal learning are the retrospective recognition of both a new significant form of knowledge, understanding or skill acquired on your own initiative and also recognition of the process of acquisition (Livingstone, 1999, p. 3-4).

Like other themes and concepts in the overall study of "education," as the literature of the past three decades aptly demonstrates, critical investigators of "informal learning" also share a variety of agreements and differences about its meaning and place. For a detailed perspective on these issues, from a British standpoint, see "Informality and Formality in Learning" (Colley et al 2004).

METHODOLOGY

Empirical data for this project was collected in two ways. First, in the late fall of 2003, a national survey questionnaire was distributed to approximately 2000 randomly sampled teachers across Canada. Secondly, beginning in March of 2004, a series of focus groups were held in a number of cities across Canada, each involving 5 to 7 classroom teachers. Funding for both aspects of this study has been provided by the WALL SSHRC project. In addition, contacts and logistical support were provided by the Canadian Teachers' Federation and the corresponding provincial associations. A more complete description of each research activity now follows.

Survey Questionnaire - The questionnaire for this study was developed in tandem with two other surveys - first, the earlier national teacher survey conducted by the NALL group (New Approaches in Life-Long Learning) in 1998, and secondly the national public survey on informal learning, undertaken by the WALL group in the fall of 2003. Names and addresses for potential respondents were randomly and proportionately sampled from the membership lists of teachers' unions in nine of the ten provinces (Given the mandatory membership legislation in place in all but one province, virtually every teacher working in a publicly-funded elementary and secondary school in Canada is included in these data-bases). Although the 1998 survey did include a French language version for circulation in Quebec, given the significant difficulties experienced at that time (costs, administrative complexities, translation, and compatibility of issues/questions) it was decided not to include a French language version on this occasion.

The questionnaire (Appendix A) consisted of an eight-page booklet containing 67 questions (some involving sub-questions). The questions were grouped into four sections pertaining to respondents' activities and opinions about their own learning activities - their formal schooling and continuing education courses, and their own informal learning in the workplace, the home and the community. In addition, there were two final sections involving background/demographic questions, work-place matters and computer/internet use.

In total, 2098 questionnaire packages were mailed out, virtually all in October and November 2003, to the home addresses of individually sampled teachers.² In addition to the actual questionnaire, the package included a pre-addressed return envelope, and a one-page letter on the letterhead of the respective provincial teachers' federation, over the signature of the president or equivalent of that organization. This letter explained the purpose of the study, the reasons for the federation's involvement, issues of privacy and confidentiality, and it encouraged recipients to respond to the study.

In January, a second package was sent to all of those teachers who did not respond to the first mailing (each response form was numbered, and used to track respondents as they were received). In addition, for those provinces where teachers' phone numbers were also supplied by provincial unions (approximately half), teachers were also phoned during January and February, and encouraged to complete the questionnaire form.

Focus Groups - In the survey questionnaire form, respondents were asked to consider providing contact information, if they were willing to be contacted about possible further involvement in the project. Approximately 35% provided this information. For the first round of eight focus groups, seven cities in three provinces were designated - Ontario (Toronto [2 groups], London, North Bay), Nova Scotia (Halifax, Sydney) and Alberta (Calgary, Edmonton). These three provinces were chosen because in 2003 they all had teacher learning requirements of varying degrees spelled out in provincial legislation or regulations.

² In fact, 2058 were initially mailed out across Canada in the fall of 2003. Because of an initial poor response from Newfoundland, a further 40 names were randomly selected from that province, and mailed packages in March of 2004.

Beginning in March of 2004, teachers who had identified themselves on the survey questionnaires, and who lived within an hour's driving distance of one of the designated cities, were phoned and asked if they would be willing to participate in a focus group. In most cases, it was possible to identify sufficient numbers of those willing and able to participate, to provide balanced focus groups (by gender, age and elementary/secondary school level)³. In two cases, however (Sydney and North Bay) it was necessary to supplement the groups with teachers contacted by local teacher association officials. The focus groups were held, either on a school day (in which case, the project reimbursed the respective boards of education for supply teachers), or on a weekend/holiday time (in which case, participants were given an honorarium of \$100). Lunch, and mileage expenses were also covered.

The groups, each conducted by one of the authors, and each involving five to seven participants, generally lasted about 2 to 3 hours, not including a break for lunch. Participants were initially asked to respond individually to a standard protocol of questions relating to their engagement in, and opinions about, informal and formal learning, as well as the ways in which social and material relations in their workplaces, and in their homes, intersected with their ability to pursue such learning. As the group process progressed, participants interacted with each other on these and related issues - questioning, clarifying, posing alternative opinions and beliefs, etc. All of the proceedings were audio recorded, and subsequently transcribed.

FINDINGS - SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Response Rates - Of the 2098 forms mailed out, 1024 completed forms (48.8% of the total mailed) were returned. Gross response rates were generally similar across the country, with only some of the Maritime provinces showing proportionately lower returns. In addition, approximately 75 forms were returned unopened, in most cases with a written indication on the envelope that they were undeliverable because of lack of current address. On this basis (even without extrapolating—speculating on how many additional forms were neither delivered nor returned), marginally over 50% of teachers who received forms responded to them. As explained in the methodology section above, this otherwise national survey did not include teachers working in Quebec.

Summary of Characteristics of Respondents – What follows is a short listing of a few of the relevant characteristics of the respondents. Appendix A contains a more detailed breakdown with various comparisons. Of the 1024 respondents of the survey:

- 70% (714) were full-time teachers or consultants/administrators
- the median age was 47 years.
- the median teaching experience was 18 years
- 74% were female
- 79% were married/partnered
- 61% had children living at home
- 88% were Canadian-born
- 95% self-identified as “White”
- 98% expressed themselves “most easily” in English

³ There was an under-representation of teachers with fewer years of teaching experience; the next phase will include a couple of focus groups of beginning teachers.

Teacher Workload

The most significant finding in the survey, related to workload, was that full-time classroom teachers and department heads/assistant heads (n=714) reported an overall average (mean) workload of almost 49 hours per week, a slight increase from that reported in the 1998 survey (48 hours). Numbers aside, however, almost 80% reported that their overall workload had “significantly increased” or “increased.” Further workload details are provide later in this paper. In the meantime, as the following data will indicate, this perception of workload increase has had significant impacts on the ways in which teachers are able to engage in formal and informal learning.

Formal Learning Activities of Respondents

Respondents were asked whether, in the past year, they had participated in (taken and/or given) any kind of formalized learning activity - organized workshops, courses or programs for education, training or general interest, regardless of length. Over 90% (90.2%) of respondents stated that they had participated in one or more courses and workshops. As Table A indicates, this is a significant increase from the 86% participation rate which teachers reported in 1998.

By comparison, as indicated in the 2003 general WALL survey of Canadian residents over 18 years of age who are not in school, only 32% of respondents reported that they had engaged in similar pursuits in the past year. Even when one examines just those Canadian residents actively participating in the labour force, the number of formal learners still numbered only 40.5% of the total group.

Table A - Taken/given one or more courses or workshops in the previous 12 months

2003		1998		2003 WALL		
All teachers	Full-time teachers	All teachers	Full-time teachers	Adult population not in school	Labour force	Labour force, degree required
90%	91%	85%	86%	42%	49%	70%
923	642	733	631	8465	3904	860

As Table B below suggests, teachers of all ages engage overwhelmingly in further formal education, regardless of their years of teaching experience. As the table also indicates, while there is a slight reduction in educational pursuits among those with more than twenty years of teaching seniority, 88% of these senior teachers are still participating in formal courses and workshops to enhance their own learning (and more frequently than their counterparts five years earlier). Again, while reasons for this increase over the past five years in participation in formal education among teachers of all ages have yet to be systematically explored, anecdotal evidence suggests that this increase is at least somewhat related to the restructuring activities of school boards and provincial ministries of education, and the need for teachers to engage in more courses and workshops related to these interventions.

Table B - Involvement in Courses, by Seniority - 2003 and 1998

% of Respondents taking/giving one or more workshops/courses in previous 12 months				
Years of teaching experience	2003		1998	
	%	N	%	N
All respondents				
1-10 years	94	233	89%	230
11-20 years	93	328	89%	201
21+ years	88	395	82%	305
Total	91%	956	86%	736
Full-time teachers				
1-10	94%	189	88%	161
11-20	92%	228	91%	144
21+	88%	289	83%	204
Total	91%	706	87%	509
*Excludes those with less than one year of experience.				

In regard to numbers of courses and workshops taken/given during the previous 12 months, full-time teachers varied somewhat, depending upon gender, age and type of school. As shown in Table B-1 (Appendix B), women teachers, elementary school teachers, and teachers with less experience (1-10 years) generally have participated more than their counterparts.

Generally speaking, among all full-time classroom teachers who responded, 32% had taken one or two, 29% had taken three or four, and the remaining 30% had participated in anywhere from five to twenty such organized activities. Except for the upper range of "5 or more" courses, teachers reported haven taken slightly more classes in 1998 than did those in 2003 (see Table B-2 in Appendix B).

Types of Formal Learning Activity - The content of the courses and workshops engaged in by the respondents varied significantly. In addition, participation rates in the various activity areas also changed from the rates reported in the 1998 survey. 80% of all respondents reporting had engaged in "work-related" courses [60% in 1998]. In addition, 30% indicated they had taken computer related courses [37%], 39% had taken academic courses [28%], and 25% had taken recreation-related courses [20%].

Table C - Types of Courses/Workshops Taken, 2003 & 1998

% of Respondents taking Courses/Workshops				
	2003		1998	
	%	N	%	N
Work-related	80%	742	60%	313
Computer-related	30%	260	37%	194
Academic courses	39%	355	28%	145
Recreation-related	25%	231	20%	102

Time Spent on Formal Learning Activities - On average, full-time classroom teachers reported spending over 7 ½ hours per week over the past year in activities related to formal learning - in attendance at courses and workshops, preparing for and taking courses and working on course assignments, studying, etc. preparing for courses, etc.

As suggested in Table B-3 (Appendix B), there were some variations in their engagement with these pursuits based upon respondent background. Overall female teachers reported more hours than their male counterparts. Surprisingly enough the next set of comparisons suggest that female teachers “with kids” spend somewhat more time (6.7 hours) on formal learning activities than do females with “no kids” (5.8 hours). Male teachers show no difference (based on having kids), but the N values, especially for “Male no kids” are quite low (59) to draw any conclusions. At present there seems little explanation for this counter-intuitive result. In comparing the levels of schooling, elementary teachers are generally reporting slightly more hours of formal learning activities (6.0 hours) than are secondary teachers (5.5 hours), who as a group report more variability. Finally, teachers from Ontario are reporting significantly more hours (7.0 hours) than their counterparts from Atlantic Canada (5.8 hours) or Western Canada (5.2 hours).

As shown in Table D below, in comparing the number of hours spent on formal learning to the years of experience, a general trend points to a decrease in hours with more years of experience. The standard deviation and thus the variability from the mean also declines by each 10-year increase of teaching experience

Table D - Average Weekly Hours Spent on Courses/Workshops, by Seniority (full-time teachers)

Teaching Experience	Mean	.S.D.	Median	N
1 - 10 yrs	8.8	15.4	2	189
11 - 20 yrs	6.6	12.6	2	229
21+ yrs	4.3	9.2	1	290
Total	6.2	12.4	2	708

Reasons for Taking Courses and Workshops - Motivations varied for engaging in these formal courses and workshops. As shown in Table B-4 (Appendix B), 18% of those respondents taking courses stated that one or more of the courses they had taken were part of a degree, diploma or certificate program at a university, community college, technical or business school [down from 19% in 1998], while 20% stated that one or more of their courses qualified them for (additional) certification related to their teaching credentials.

Many respondents reported that they had taken courses in the previous year which had been “required.” 26.7% took one or more courses required by their employer, 7.6% required by a professional body, 4.1% required by “government regulation,” and 5.5% required by other organizations.

Reasons for taking courses, differentiated by region, are provided in Table E. The most significant difference appears in those courses “required by professional body,” where Ontario is significantly higher than Atlantic Canada and double Western Canada. However as only 41 teachers selected this reason, statistically it cannot be taken as significant.

Table E – Reasons for taking Courses and Workshops– by region

	Atlantic	Ontario	West	Total
Part of a degree, diploma, certificate	17%	19%	18%	18%
Additional certification	17%	23%	16%	20%
Required by employer	27%	25%	30%	27%
Required by professional body	5.3%	9.8%	4.9%	7.6%
Required by government regulation	5.3%	3.9%	3.8%	4.1%
Required by other organizations	4.0%	6.0%	5.5%	5.5%

Related to the matter of motivation, 64% of all those taking courses reported that they themselves had paid the fees for one or more of these activities (up from 54% in 1998). By comparison, 52% stated that fees had been paid at least once by their employer [44%], 19% reported that courses had been paid by their union or professional association [14%], and 15% participated in courses which were paid jointly by their employer and union/professional association [13%]. It should also be noted that 20.5% of respondents taking courses and workshops reported that one or more of these activities had no fees attached to them.

Future Plans - 86% of responding teachers reported that they would definitely (54%) or possibly (32%) take one or more courses in the future (an identical figure to the 1998 report). However, only 18% of these respondents stated that these future courses would be required to maintain certification or employment. Again, these numbers compare favourably with working general Canadian labour force, in jobs requiring a degree, where only 74% indicated they would or might be so engaged. (See Table B-5 in Appendix B for further details).

Informal Learning Activities of Survey Respondents

The first part of the survey questionnaire asked teachers to describe the ways in which they engaged in formally organized educational activities. By comparison, the next part of the questionnaire asked them to think about the various ways they had engaged in informal learning, outside of formally organized courses and workshops - in their communities, in their workplaces, in their homes, and elsewhere.

Themes for Informal Learning in the Workplace - The questionnaire form listed a number of work-related themes around which self-directed learning could take place. Teachers were asked to identify any in which they had informally (that is, not through

organized courses or workshops) acquired new skills and/or knowledge over the past twelve months - things that would have assisted them in their present job, and/or would assist them in assuming new job responsibilities. Virtually all respondents stated that they were certainly "learning on the job." 80% had informally gained new knowledge and skills about computers, while well over 50% of all respondents indicated that informal learning had occurred in each of a number of other work-related areas - teaching subject matter, keeping up with new teaching-related knowledge, classroom management, curriculum policy, learning about student problems, and learning about team/communication skills. As Table F also indicates, there was a distinct drop in these informal learning activities, as compared to teachers responding on the 1998 survey questionnaire. Possible reasons for this will be explored later in this paper.

Table F - Types of Informal Learning, 2003 & 1998

Areas of Informal Learning	2003			1998		
	Total %	Ontario %	Rest %	Total %	Ontario %	Rest %
Computers	80	78	83	90	92	87
Teaching subject	70	71	68	72	73	71
Keep up with new knowledge	63	65	60	64	66	61
Classroom strategies/management	61	60	61	64	64	63
Curriculum policy	62	66	57	69	75	66
Learn about student problems	51	53	48	66	69	62
Learn team/communication skills	50	50	50	60	60	59
Teacher education/development	47	50	44	48	45	50
Employee rights benefits	44	44	43	53	61	47
Extra-curricular themes	46	54	38	51	55	46
Technical equipment	42	42	43	41	39	43
Health & safety issues	39	45	32	34	33	34
Special Ed Inclusion	35	38	32	n/a		32
N	701 / 689			515		

Approaches to Informal Learning in the Workplace - Interestingly, there were also significant differences between 1998 and 2003, in the ways in which teachers reported that they engaged in informal learning. In many cases, the more recent reports indicated a lessening in the numbers of teachers who engaged other people in their learning activities. For example, when asked how this informal learning took place, only 70% indicated that significant amounts took place collaboratively with colleagues, as compared to five years previous, when 82% so responded. Similarly, 48% (as compared to an earlier 63%) also stated they engage in informal workplace learning on their own. Other modes of informal learning included (1998 data in square brackets): interactions with students - 9.5% [24%] of all respondents; with principals or school board administrators - 10% [27%]; and with parents - 4% [14%].

Extent of Informal Learning in the Workplace - Respondents were asked to indicate the number of hours per week they were engaged in new informal learning activity in the

course of their work. Overall, the average amount of time spent on informal learning on the job was 4.1 hours per week, up slightly from 3.9 hours reported in 1998.

Table G - Time Spent on Informal Learning in the Workplace, by Gender, Seniority and Geographic Region

Informal workplace learning, average hours per week			
	Mean	Median	N
All full-time classroom teachers	4.1 hrs	2 hrs	663
Gender			
Female	4.2 hrs	2 hrs	471
Male	3.8 hrs	2 hrs	192
Teaching Experience			
1 - 10 yrs	4.5	2	185
11 - 20 yrs	3.9	2	222
21+ yrs	3.9	2	280
Total	4.1	2	887
Region			
Atlantic	5.2	2	98
Ontario	3.9	2	358
West	3.8	2	237
Total	4.1	2	693

Perceived Usefulness of Informal Learning in the Workplace - When asked how helpful their employment-related informal learning time had been in the previous 12 months, over half (51.3%) stated it had been “very helpful” and a further 45.9% found it at least “somewhat helpful.” Three-quarters of all respondents (74.5%) confirmed that, in the previous four weeks, they had sought “advice from someone knowledgeable, with the intention of developing [their] job skills or knowledge.”

Informal Learning in the Home - When asked how many hours they spent working on "things around the home" (examples such as "cooking, cleaning, home maintenance and repair, shopping, child or elder care" were provided), respondents cited an average (median) of 20 hours of work per week. In addition, 71% indicated that these tasks involved new, informal learning experiences and that, on average, 1.4 hours per week was spent in this kind of informal learning activity.

70% of teachers responding to these questions stated they had engaged in informal learning in the area of "renovation, landscaping or gardening," closely followed by 63% who indicated new learning related to “computers or new computer skills.” Significant numbers of respondents also reported learning in the following areas: home cooking (55%); budgeting or financial management (41%); home/auto maintenance and/or repair (39%); parenting and childcare (33%); cleaning (25%); caring for the elderly (20%). Over half of the respondents (55%) believed that the skills and knowledges they had acquired through their household-related learning had been helpful in their paid employment.

Full-time classroom tchrs	4.1 hrs	9.6 hrs	6 hrs	6963	4.1	10	506
Gender							
Female	4.0	9.5	6.0	471	4.0	10	486
Male	3.8	9.8	6.8	192	3.8	10	234

General Approaches to Learning - Teachers were also asked a number of questions related to how they saw themselves as learners, in particular, how they went about engaging in learning pursuits, and what they were interested in pursuing in the next twelve months.

Favoured Modes of Informal Learning - One question asked respondents how they “usually go about it” if they “are trying to learn something outside of a formal course or training program.” An number of options were listed, and respondents were asked to select “one or two.” Consulting someone else elicited the highest response (52%), with consulting a text/guide book figured almost as highly (48%). (For further details, see Table B-7, Appendix B).

Formal vs. Informal Learning Preferences - Similarly, another question required respondents to think about their preferences for modes of learning - course-based, or more informal. Only 11% clearly favoured formal course-based learning, while a fifth (20%) favoured learning informally (whether on their own or with others). By comparison over 26% indicated that they favoured both modes equally, while over half of all respondents (53%) stated that the decision depended in each instance upon what is to be learned.

TEACHER WORKLOAD AND WORK INTENSIFICATION

Full-time teachers (n= 714) reported an average workload of 48.9 hours per week, derived from two components. First, teachers were assigned, on average, 30.1 hours per week of classroom teaching and other work with students, along with such additional timetabled tasks as school administration, library, administration, hall supervision, preparation and marking, and so on.

In addition to these formally assigned hours, teachers reported that, on average they spent a further 18.8 hours per week on school related tasks - approximately 9.8 hours at school, and 9.0 hours at home and elsewhere. Such tasks ranged from preparing and marking student work and taking part in student extra-curricular activities, to communicating with students and parents, and participating in subject, school, board and federation meetings.

These data indicate some increase over the findings in the 1998 survey. At that time, teachers reported, on average, a workload of 47.8 hours per week.

Comparative Workload Findings

The reported workload findings are consistent with other Canadian studies of teacher workloads which asked the same kinds of questions over the past decade. A chart

summarizing the results of some of these studies is shown as Table I. In addition, there have been a number of British studies of teacher workloads since 1994. The most recent (School Teachers' Review Body, 2004) was based on a diary survey of 2300 respondents, teachers in England and Wales. It was the fifth such survey commissioned by the School Teachers' Review Body. Their findings for full-time classroom teachers show total hours worked by primary teachers at 52.5 hours, and by secondary at 49.9 hours (53.9 and 50.3 when "management allowance" is included, and 51.6 by full-time secondary department heads). However, a key finding is that when prior surveys are analyzed, none of the groups has seen a significant increase in total hours worked since 2000. The big workload increases in the U.K. were between 1994 and 2000.⁴

Table I - Recent Canadian Teacher Workload Studies

(Note: time-use diary studies are indicated by ■ in this table. The others used a questionnaire with the respondents estimating their workload. Both the NALL and NSTU studies found that teachers reported more hours worked in time diary studies than the same respondents had previously estimated on survey questionnaires.)

Study	Date	Work Hours	Other Findings/Features
PEITF (Prince Edward Island Teachers Federation)	2002	48 to 52 hours per week	*combination of survey and time diary methods - 350 teachers surveyed in 2001
B.C. Secondary English Teachers (Naylor, BCTF)	2001	53.1 hours/week	*included 29.5 hours of non-contact time. *part of a larger survey of 1500 B.C. teachers on issues related to workload.
Ont. Secondary School Teachers (Smaller et al, NALL) ■	2001	48.7 hours/week	1.7 more hours per week than the same teachers reported on 1999 NALL survey, and 1.3 hours/wk more learning time
Nova Scotia Teachers (Harvey and Spinney, St. Mary's Univ.) ■	2000	52.5 hours/week	Less than 1/2 (26.2 hrs) is instructional time. 90% of teachers report stress and feelings of despair.
Alberta Teachers Workload Study –ATA ■	1999	53.3 hours/week secondary	*3% of this is for PD and ATA activities. * workload varied between 50.5 to 54.3 hours depending on exam scheduling
Smaller et al, CTF/NALL CanTchrs Learning Survey)	1999	47 hours /week	Teachers also did 11.7 hours of job- related learning
Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey	1998	49.4 (incl. 6.4 hours/wk unpaid overtime)	Note: Ontario teachers reported 53.4 hours/week)
Saskatchewan Teachers Federation ■	1994	47 hours/week	Note: STF also studied part-time teachers in 1996-97 reporting 32 hours per week (68% of full time despite assigned duties only 57% of full time)

⁴ School Teachers' Review Body, "Teachers' Workloads Diary Survey, March 2004, U.K. Office of Manpower Economics, August 2004, page 4. The study is available at <http://www.ome.uk.com/downloads/Diary%20Survey%202004%20Part1.pdf>

Teacher Perceptions of Workload Change

It is common for teachers, when queried about their workload, to report that it is increasing. In fact, every teacher federation study summarized in Table I reported that teachers felt that their workload had increased over the past few years, and that they were feeling increasing stress levels. However, every study also reported high levels of job satisfaction.

The 714 full-time classroom teacher respondents in the 2003 WALL study follow the same pattern. When full-time classroom teachers were asked more specific questions about their workload, and the ways it had changed over the past five years, almost four-fifths (79%) reported that their overall workload had “significantly increased” (44%) or “increased” (35%) in the past five years (or less, if relatively new to teaching), while 19% stated it had remained about the same, and only 2% stated it had “decreased” or “significantly decreased.” While overall, both male and female teachers experienced increase in workload (77% vs 80%), women teachers were much more likely than their male counterparts to report “significant increases” in their work - 47% vs 39%.

Table J - Overall Perceived Workload Change in Past 5 Years, by Seniority

			Overall workload change past 5 years				Total
			significant increase	increase	about same	decrease	
Years Teaching Category	0 - 5 Years	Count	18	21	24	5	68
		% within Years Teaching Category	26.5%	30.9%	35.3%	7.4%	100.0%
	6 - 10 Years	Count	44	48	39	4	135
		% within Years Teaching Category	32.6%	35.6%	28.9%	3.0%	100.0%
	11 - 15 Years	Count	58	38	18	3	117
		% within Years Teaching Category	49.6%	32.5%	15.4%	2.6%	100.0%
	16 + Years	Count	224	166	65	6	461
		% within Years Teaching Category	48.6%	36.0%	14.1%	1.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	344	273	146	18	781
		% within Years Teaching Category	44.0%	35.0%	18.7%	2.3%	100.0%

Table K – Provincial Comparison of Perceived Workload Change in the Past 5 Years

	Significant Increase	Increase	About Same	Decrease	N
Alberta	45%	33%	21%	1%	78
Ontario	49%	31%	18%	3%	340
NS	49%	36%	15%	0%	33
Other	34%	41%	22%	3%	202

Again, more teachers in the three target provinces report a significant increase in workload in the past five years than in the six other provinces.

Among the changes in this overall workload, those aspects for which highest increases were reported were: “Dealing with administrative requests for information, forms, data, student attendance, etc” - 82%; “Time/effort required for assessing and reporting on student progress” - 78%; “Size of classes” - 61%. While these beliefs are explored in more depth later in the paper, in the context of analysis of the focus group transcripts from the three target provinces, it seems clear that having to devote more hours attending to increased bureaucratic requirements, and away from working with students themselves, understandably might lead teachers to conclude that the workload had increased.

Workload increase over the past five years was perceived equally by teachers working in elementary and secondary schools. However, the data suggests that the more senior the teacher, the more the workload is perceived to have increased over recent years. While 58% of relatively new teachers (0-5 years experience) indicate an increase in workload, the percentages rise in tandem with seniority. Almost 85% of those with 16 or more years of teaching expressed the view that workloads had indeed, increased.

Given the above results, it is not surprising that the participants in the eight focus groups (four in Ontario, two each in Alberta and Nova Scotia) emphasized work intensification in their comments. The focus groups were asked to describe how their work lives had changed over the previous five years. They spoke about increased timetabled hours, increased class sizes, increased supervision tasks, etc.

“Accountability” was a term mentioned innumerable times by focus group participants. It was raised not in the context of teachers’ obvious and accepted professional responsibility, but in relation to new or increased requirements to meet bureaucratic dicta with very little, if any, connection to useful evaluation of their work as teachers. Common to all three provinces was the imposition by their provincial governments of new course curricula and new student assessment, evaluation and reporting procedures, often with little or no in-service support to implement these changes. These government policies and related paperwork, forms and “individual education plans” were frequently cited as causes of the increased workload.

Teacher Stress

Perhaps not unrelated to increased workload, over 80% of all respondents reported that the “overall level of stress” in their work had “significantly increased” (44%) or “increased” (37%). Women teachers reported higher rates of “significant increase” in stress (48%) as compared to their male counterparts (35%).

Table L - Overall Stress-Level Change in Past 5 Years, by Gender

Stress Levels	Significant Increase	Increase	About the Same	Decrease	Significant Decrease	Total
Female	48% (267)	35% (192)	14% (76)	3% (19)	0.4% (2)	100% (556)
Male	36% (83)	42% (99)	20% (46)	1% (3)	1.3% (3)	100% (234)
Total	44% (350)	37% (291)	15% (122)	3% (22)	0.6% (5)	100% (790)

Perhaps not unrelated to issues of perceived workload, more experienced teachers also reported higher levels of stress over the past five years - again, in direct proportion to their years of seniority. These findings are illustrated in Table M.

Again, there were no significant differences in levels of stress between elementary and secondary school teachers.

Table M - Overall Stress-Level Change in Past 5 Years, by Seniority

			Overall stress level-change					Total
			significant increase	increase	about same	decrease	singnificant decrease	
Years Teaching Category	0 - 5 Years	Count	19	22	17	9	0	67
		% within Years Teaching Category	28.4%	32.8%	25.4%	13.4%	.0%	100.0%
	6 - 10 Years	Count	42	45	40	7	0	134
		% within Years Teaching Category	31.3%	33.6%	29.9%	5.2%	.0%	100.0%
	11 - 15 Years	Count	51	48	13	2	1	115
		% within Years Teaching Category	44.3%	41.7%	11.3%	1.7%	.9%	100.0%
	16 + Years	Count	235	174	53	5	4	471
		% within Years Teaching Category	49.9%	36.9%	11.3%	1.1%	.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	347	289	123	23	5	787
		% within Years Teaching Category	44.1%	36.7%	15.6%	2.9%	.6%	100.0%

Teacher Autonomy

Perhaps somewhat related to issues of workload stress, was the perceptions of full-time teachers as to the amount of autonomy they had in their work, and how that might have changed over the previous five years. While about half of respondents believed that the level of their autonomy had not changed over this time, one-third (33%) stated that it had diminished, as compared to only 18% who saw an increase. These perceptions were similar between female and male teachers, as well as those across elementary and secondary schools. However, there were significant differences, based on the years of teaching experience of respondents. 27% of relatively new teachers (0-5 years) believe that they are already experiencing a decrease in their autonomy in their work, while 36% of senior teachers report a similar conviction in this regard.

Table N - Teacher Autonomy, by Seniority

			Level of autonomy-change						Total
			significant increase	increase	about same	decrease	significant decrease	not applicable	
Years Teaching Category	0 - 5 Years	Count	2	12	35	16	2	0	67
		% within Years Teaching Category	3.0%	17.9%	52.2%	23.9%	3.0%	.0%	100.0%
	6 - 10 Years	Count	7	16	74	26	6	2	131
		% within Years Teaching Category	5.3%	12.2%	56.5%	19.8%	4.6%	1.5%	100.0%
	11 - 15 Years	Count	6	20	49	31	6	1	113
		% within Years Teaching Category	5.3%	17.7%	43.4%	27.4%	5.3%	.9%	100.0%
	16 + Years	Count	20	52	221	125	40	1	459
		% within Years Teaching Category	4.4%	11.3%	48.1%	27.2%	8.7%	.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	35	100	379	198	54	4	770
		% within Years Teaching Category	4.5%	13.0%	49.2%	25.7%	7.0%	.5%	100.0%

Teacher Job Satisfaction

In spite of these pressures, however, among full-time respondents, 29% reported that they were “very satisfied” with their jobs, while a further 56% were at least “somewhat satisfied.” By comparison, only 9% were “dissatisfied” and 2% “very dissatisfied” with their job

To be sure, respondents will use a variety of criteria in rating their job satisfaction – perhaps as compared to other jobs they have had, or know about; perhaps as compared to how they might have felt about teaching in a prior year. For others, their response might simply signal some level of pragmatic acceptance with their job. It is interesting to note that in two consecutive annual teacher surveys undertaken by the Ontario College of Teachers (2003 and 2004), the question “Will you be a teacher in five years’ time” was posed. In one year, the percentage of those responding “probably” or “definitely” jumped from 65% to 71% - raising questions about what might have happened in the course of one year to occasion that change⁵ (Jamieson 2004).

Focus Groups - Findings and Analysis

Overview - Overall, the eight initial focus groups (four in Ontario, two each in Alberta and Nova Scotia) proved to be a rich source of data on themes relating to teachers’ formal and informal learning. The atmosphere in each case was very congenial, and after the initial reporting from each participant on his/her own situation in relation to learning opportunities and strategies, the discussions opened up, and displayed, a

⁵ Presumably, one reason for leaving would be normal retirement; no information is provided as to whether there was an appreciable change in numbers of teachers who would be within five years of that date. Interestingly, another question asked teachers the extent to which they had “confidence in the quality of Ontario’s education system.” In one year, those expressing “confidence” jumped from 47% to 64%! - perhaps not unrelated to the defeat of an extremely anti-teacher provincial government during that time. One might suggest some relation between these two questions, therefore suggesting yet another reason for the change in overall job satisfaction.

significant number of events, issues, experiences, opinions and beliefs relating to these themes.

To the extent that these discussions covered themes that were also explored in the more quantitative questionnaire survey, in many respects the comments of the focus group participants served well to enhance the specific findings of the survey. In addition, however, the discussions around the focus group table also served to identify, and highlight, important themes in the lives and work of these teachers - influences which both underlay and intersect with their ability to engage in their own formal and informal learning. Two of these themes will also be explored in the following sections of this paper - themes critically important in and of themselves, but also in the ways in which they intersected with teachers' capacity to engage in further learning - formal and informal.

Work Intensification - As noted in the analysis of the survey findings above, the weekly total number of hours of work reported by respondents increased appreciably in the five-year span between the 1998 and 2003 questionnaire surveys from 47 to 52 hours per week. Understandably, these changes also were reflected in related survey questions. For example, when asked if, "in the past five years (or less, if you are relatively new to teaching) . . . [their] overall workload [had] changed," over 77% of those responding stated that there had been a "significant increase" (43%) or "increase" (34%) in their workload. When asked what more specific areas of their work had increased, the main sources intensification related to "dealing with administrative requests for information, forms" etc (82%), "time/effort required for assessing and reporting on student progress" (78%), "time needed for curriculum development/lesson preparation (68%). Intersections with gender were also significant, with women reporting more intensification in each of these categories.

Not surprisingly then, this workload increase also featured as a main theme during the focus group discussions. "Workload," "intensification" and similar terms often were used spontaneously by teachers in these discussions, in describing how their work lives had changed over the previous five years. Among many teachers, this intensification resulted from straightforward issues like increased timetabled hours, increased class sizes, increased supervision tasks, etc. In addition, however, respondents raised a number of other themes which intersected closely with (if not serving as a direct cause of) work intensification.

"Accountability" was mentioned innumerable times - not in the context of teachers' obvious and accepted professional responsibility, but in relation to new or increased requirements to meet bureaucratic dicta, with very little, if any, connection to useful evaluation of their work as teachers. For example, "accountability" was often used in the same sentence with terms like "paperwork," "forms," "individual education plans," etc. [quotes]

Another source of intensification for a number of participants was the seemingly widespread imposition of new syllabi and course curricula, and new student assessment, evaluation and reporting procedure, often with little or no in-service support to implement these changes.

Clearly related to this intensification was the frequent reference by teachers to increased “stress” as a major factor influencing their ability to carry out their jobs. As noted in the discussion of the findings from the national survey questionnaire, 81% of all respondents reported that their levels of stress had “increased” (37%) or “significantly increased” (44%) over the previous five years. The teachers participating in the eight focus groups were no different in this regard - in fact, “stress” was probably one of (if not, the) terms employed most frequently in their discussions. It was not a term that was taken lightly. All too often, mention was also made of the longer-term effects of this affliction - sick days being taken, and long-term disability leaves of absence. As Carolyn, from Toronto, noted rather poignantly, "This was the first time in my 25-year career that I had to apply for stress leave - twice! . . . Just look at our absenteeism in terms of stress!"

Effects of Work Intensification on Teachers’ Learning Activity - The impact of this work intensification on teachers’ capacity to engage in their own further learning was made abundantly clear from many of their comments around the table. In many cases, it was clear that these teachers, and presumably many of their colleagues, had made difficult decisions not to enrol in formal courses and workshops because of time constraints and the pressures of work (both during school hours and the marking/preparation work they had to bring home). Karl (Sydney) spoke very emphatically about this.

. . . the new elementary report cards are just incredible. If you have that many students and you are required to test as often as they suggest and then report such microscopic detail, then at the end of everyday...I am speaking as a 54 year old man ...I am tired everyday going home from school and I could not imagine taking courses on weekends and in evenings because it takes so long to wind down and relax.

Similarly, Catherine (Calgary) talked about the ways in which her commitment as a physical education teacher, with all the after-school sports activities, seriously affected her capacity to engage in her own further learning.

And it is not only hours, but there is supposed to be time for those hours because you are in practice times or you are in game times or you are in tournament times. And so you would not even dream about taking on a formal workshop or anything because it would conflict with your living, and let a group of kids down who are dedicated to a team for a certain amount of time.

Carolyn (Toronto) as well expressed concern about not being able to participate in more professional development activities: "People are under a lot of stress and our formal learning is taking a back seat to it because when you do take anything formal it ends up being too demanding."

Another aspect which was often noted in these focus groups was the concern raised by participant about the nature and quality of their engagement in new learning routines. Where teachers were involved with formal learning activities, it was often not courses and workshops that they themselves would have found most useful, but instead turned out to be activities which were required by their supervisors, in the context of the work intensification noted above. Many teachers talked about the content of workshops and courses held during official Professional Development days as being laid on by school

board officials, in order to enhance specific school or board-wide goals which, all too often, had also been established in a top-down manner. Even where specific school-wide goals were seen as useful or important (for example, enhancing skills in teaching reading, mathematics, etc), concerns were raised with the way in which all teachers were required to participate in the same workshops, without taking into consideration their own individual backgrounds, skills and experience in the subject matter at hand.

Albert's (Halifax) narrative in this regard sounded all too familiar among teachers generally.

Well every year is different. Like probably five years [ago we had a] push on that because everyone is doing math in-servicing. Then we had a couple of new superintendents [who] wanted to be more accountable so we had this battery of reading tests and reading tests throughout the Grade two/three and six. And I think nines had math tests starting this year and then to make things more accountable we had PD based on those results which again is more guided reading, running records and more AYR [?] which I had the last couple of years and that has been mentioned the same thing over and over again. They say well that is the way it has to be done because it is cost effective, and there are new teachers who have taught four/five years after elementary ...[inaudible] which sounds great, except you have teachers who have had the PD already.

Informal Learning and Work Intensification - Given the negative effects of work intensification on their capacity to engage in formal learning activities, the question arises whether teachers would then correspondingly engage in more informal learning activity - either to fulfill ongoing learning interests, and/or to otherwise pick up new knowledge and skills required to meet their ongoing obligations as teachers (eg. in order to implement new curriculum, evaluation and reporting requirements). While this “substitution” phenomenon may be the case in some instances, it is interesting to note that the comments of focus group participants suggested the opposite - that this work intensification also affected their capacity to engage in further informal, as well as formal, learning. Betty (London) certainly noted this effect.

Paul: Okay. Are you aware of any other government regulated policies and programs that may have certainly affected you in your learning in the last few years or have we sort of hit that one?

Betty: The paperwork. It impacts on the time that you might do some of that informal learning after school or at lunch because you are busy filling out forms in triplicate or putting together yet another referral package for an assessment.

Jane (Toronto) described how she attempted, only partially successfully, to maintain her conditions for informal learning, in spite of work intensification and cutbacks.

Probably most of my informal learning is talking to others, trying to network when teachers had to increase their workload in secondary system, teach the extra class there was less time to talk to each other. Our staff room was removed in the funding formulae and so with no staff room and no common place to meet and no common time to meet there, there was more of an earnest need to just engage and dialog with each other – what are you doing in your classroom? That closed our idea of you trying

to find out what everyone else is doing and creating teams, learning teams that we could talk with each other what learning is going on. So it would be generated I supposed, I still call it very informal, very haphazardly but in a desperation to figure out what's going on. So we are more isolated and therefore a need to talk but it's not there.

Ruth (North Bay) had very similar analysis of the reasons why she found herself less able to engage in the informal learning associated with collegial discussions, given the workload issues.

. . . unfortunately our biggest contract allowed that cap to be pierced after January so some classes do get very large, which then again affects the whole workload issue, which allows for less time for formal learning. What has affected me because I am in a small school so there is a large amount of supervision time which perhaps high school teachers do not have to deal with but my planning time now is less than my supervision time. So I do 160 minutes of supervision and I only have 120 minutes of preparation time. So that is where it cuts down on my informal learning, and it cuts down on that informal congeniality thing because you are always on duty. So you do not have a chance.

In fact, several participants, in one way or another, referred or alluded to the concept of "survival" in attempting to describe the effects of this recent work intensification on their ability to engage in either formal or informal learning. Where active, even "thriving," engagement in new learning was the perceived earlier modus, for many this had shifted to a much more minimalist engagement in recent times. Ruth had a intriguing expression to describe this new reality - "downloading learning" - which affected both teachers and their students.

Last but not least, I guess I'm finding ways to incorporate group assessment times where we meet together and do group marking, again try to find out how everyone is juggling with that. I'm little afraid in my department as a leader that so many of the new teachers are what we call "downloading learning." So they will just print out missives from the Internet, put a staple in it and give it to the students so that the learning is not being gleaned, organized and appropriate for student learning. They just sort of download it and packaged and hand it out which has caused doing a lot of photocopying and not effective learning. So those were just things I'm trying to work with in my own mind of how we are packaging learning. And I find we just have young people teaching to the older people and I'm a little bit worried about the professional thinking and that perhaps the blind are leading the desperate.

Personal/Family Lives and Career Trajectories - Among the teacher demographic changes demonstrated in the five year span between the 1998 and 2003 surveys (and mirroring related data from Statistics Canada and individual provincial sources), there are two significant (and related) aspects - first, the lowering average age of teachers in Canada, and secondly the increase in numbers who have children in their homes. Certainly, throughout the focus group discussions, in the context of inquiring about participants' engagement in formal/informal learning, "children" and "family" were often drawn into the mix. Similarly, a number of participants also referred to their

perceptions about how they saw their work as teachers in the longer term, and the ways in which plans for engagement in further learning were influenced (or hampered) by these considerations.

There is no question that, for many teachers, parenting clearly interfered with their ability to engage in as much formal (and even informal) learning, either at the workplace or elsewhere. As Judy (Toronto) explained,

In regard to formal learning I like many people here have done a number of AQ courses in the past, and especially after I first graduated I did French Immersion and then I did a Co-op Specialist which is three courses and a Guidance Specialist which is a three-course Specialist program, and Special Ed Gifted. So these were done in the evening during the school year or in the summer and July. I feel I was adding to my qualifications base and my diversity in order to stay in the system, and also be at most service to the students. So I felt they were very worthwhile, they were affordable at the time and I had time. I then had a little boy who is now just eight, and I have no time. I have my marking and whatever time I'm not marking I give to my child. And that leaves very little time left over for either formal learning for exchanges with colleagues in a formal way.

As a relatively young teacher, Mary (North Bay) also closely experienced these pressures on her life as a paid teacher and a mother - and compares them to what she understands to the situation in other occupational groups.

I think that any learning we do should be in our work day. If you look at other fields of work if there is training or new skills to be learned people go during the work day, they are not working during they holidays, they are not working during the evening. And you know teachers have personal lives. We have families that we have to look after, we have children that we are raising. We know as teachers what happens to students who are not given attention; to children who are not given attention by their families; and sometimes some of the expectations that are put on teachers and I think young teachers are more likely to feel the stress and feel as if they have to jump through all these hoops, whereas older teachers do not feel that same stress. Some young teachers are putting off having families because they feel like they have to take this course and they have to do that when honestly they are hire to teach a certain grade. They have been hired to do this job but it seems like doing that job it not enough, and that does not happen in many other fields of work where you are expected to go so far beyond what your definitions are. . . . Teachers are learners and teachers like to learn and teachers like to get better and present our classes in a better way every year; that is what we like. We are not stagnant, and we do want change, but as human beings we cannot make this change happen on the backs of our families.

Perhaps Danny's (London) summary pinpoints the ambivalence which many teachers experience in this regard.

I would like to take more formal and pursue some education in terms of education courses and AQ courses. Whether that's going to happen in the next couple years I don't know just because of my family.

SUMMARY OF OVERALL STUDY

Based upon the returns from this cross-Canada sampled survey, and the focus groups undertaken in three provinces to date, it would appear that elementary and secondary school teachers share a number of similarities about their work load, their own engagement in further education, the extent to which they engage in informal learning, and their interests and plans for future self-learning.

Full-time teachers surveyed in this study reported an average overall workload of almost 49 hours a week. 42 of these hours were spent in school, working directly with students and undertaking related tasks such as preparation, marking, supervision, administration, etc. An additional 10 hours of directly related school work were spent each week in their homes. These hours indicate a modest increase from teachers in the 1998 survey, where an overall average of 48 work hours per week were reported. These figures are highly similar to those found in a number of other studies undertaken in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the United States in the past five years.

Over 90% of all teachers reported that they had engaged in one or more formal courses and/or workshops in the preceding year, while 57% took three or more such courses. In this regard, teachers appear to be much more engaged in further education than those working in the Canadian labour force overall, where only 49% were similarly involved. The subject nature of these courses varied considerably. Over 80% of all teachers engaged in courses with employment-related themes, while almost 40% took academic courses, and almost 30% learned about computers. As compared to 1998, where almost half of those taking courses reported that one or more of these courses were required or recommended by an employer, 27% of teachers in this survey responded similarly.

The content of the courses and workshops engaged in by the respondents varied significantly. Over 80% (82%) of all respondents reporting had engaged in "work-related" courses [61% in 1998]. In addition, 29% indicated they had taken computer related courses [37%], 39.2% had taken academic courses [27%], and 25.5% had taken recreation-related courses [21%].

In addition to reporting on time spent in further education activities, teachers reported that they were actively engaged in informal learning activity. Virtually all stated that they were continually "learning on the job" - almost 80% were informally gaining knowledge and skills in computers, while a significant number also reported learning in each of a number of work-related areas - teamwork/communication skills, teaching a particular grade/subject, classroom management, student problems, and keeping up with new teaching-related knowledge. Over 70% of respondents reported that they engaged in informal learning primarily through working collaboratively with colleagues. In addition, over 95% reported that they used computers in their own homes for an average of 3 hours per week, while over 85% spent an additional two hours per week specifically on Internet.

In comparison with the general adult labour force, Canadian teachers are almost twice as likely to be engaged in further education as the general labour force. Teachers are also less likely to declare that they do extensive informal learning related either to their

employment or to their general interests. Nevertheless, virtually all teachers recognize that they do informal learning on the job, see much of their informal learning as closely related to their jobs, and estimate that they do a substantial amount of informal learning (about 10 hours a week) beyond their heavy employment hours and their very high participation in further education.

Appendix A: General Background Characteristics of Respondents⁶

Gender and Age - Of the 96% of respondents who indicated their gender, approximately three-quarters (74.3%) were women and one-quarter men (25.7%). This is a shift from the respondents in the 1998 survey, where the breakdown was 67% to 33%, a ratio which then reflected closely data provided by both the Canadian Teachers' Federation and Statistics Canada (Tremblay, 1997) as representative of the teaching body. While more recent national comparative statistical data is not available, sources at the CTF suggest that this increase in the percentage of female teachers across Canada parallels recent anecdotal evidence they have been receiving since 2000.⁷ According to BCTF and Ministry of Education data sources, 69% of British Columbia teachers are female, while the Ontario Teacher Pension Plan Board states that 70% of Ontario teachers are female. In any event, it would appear that women were slightly more inclined to respond to the questionnaire than their male counterparts.

Of 80% of respondents who provided their year of birth, ages ranged from 23 to 63 years, with a mean of 46 years (median 47 years). Women teachers' average age was one year lower (45.7) than their male counterparts (46.7) This overall mean age is slightly higher than the 44 years reported from respondents in the 1998 survey, and the 43 years reported by StatsCan for their latest reporting year of 2000, with significant increases in the proportion of women teachers in Canada. However, it does equate closely with Ontario Teacher Pension Plan Board data which stated that, for Ontario at least, the average age of teachers was 45 years

TABLE A-1 - Background Characteristics of Respondents

Background Characteristics		2003		1998	
		%	(N)	%	(N)
Gender	Female	74%	(728)	67%	(502)
	Male	26%	(251)	33%	(251)
Age	Median				
	Mean	46 years		44 years	
	Range	24-64 years		23-64 years	

Other Background Characteristics - 87% of all respondents indicated they were Canadian born (up slightly from 85% in 1998), and, while 98% identified English as the language they could express themselves in "most easily," 19% stated that they could speak at least one further language "well enough to hold a conversation." 95% identified themselves as being "White" (up from 92% in 1998) while 5% self-identified

⁶ Note, with the exception of the question concerning race, in every case, responses provided indicate the percentage of those respondents who answered the respective question. Where more than 5% of respondents did not answer a question, this is noted in the text.

⁷ Phone conversation with John Staple, June 9, 2004, A similar survey undertaken in BC in 2001 resulted in a response rate of 70% female and 30% male (Schaefer 2001).

as belonging to other ethno-cultural groups (up from 4% in 1998).⁸ By comparison, 7% of respondents identified themselves as “member of a visible minority” group.

Among the 978 who responded to the question, 4% (39) indicated that they considered themselves “to be a person with a disability.”

In relation to family status, 79% indicated that they lived with a spouse or partner. In 88% of these cases, the spouse/partner was also working for pay, with 84% of this latter group employed full-time. ?% of all respondents had children living at home.

TABLE A-2 - Other Background Characteristics of Respondents

Background Characteristics		2003		1998	
		%	(N)	%	(N)
Country of Birth	Canada	88%	(861)	85%	(634)
	USA	2.0%	(20)	2.1%	(16)
	England	1.6%	(15)	3.2%	(24)
	Other	8.3%	(82)	9.6%	(71)
Language "express yourself most easily"	English	98%	(969)	94%	(702)
	French	1.5%	(15)	1.9%	(14)
	Both	0.1%	(1)	4.0%	(30)
Race	White	95%	(933)	96%	(691)
	Chinese	1.5%	(15)	0.9%	(6)
	Aboriginal	0.7%	(7)	0.4%	(3)
	Other	2.7%	(26)	2.9%	(21)
Person with disability		4%	(41)	N/A	
Family Status	Married/partner	78%	(762)	77%	(571)
	Sep/Divorced	8.4%	(81)	9.0%	(66)
	Widowed	0.9%	(9)	1.2%	(9)
	Never married	12%	(112)	12%	(92)
	Other	0.7%	(7)	n/a	
	No answer	5.2%	(53)	2.1%	(16)
Children at home	Under 6 years	14%	(143)		
	6-12 years	22%	(226)		
	Over 12 years	36%	(371)		
	Total	?	?	55%	
Use computer at home?		94%	(919)	86%	(640)
Hours per week? (not internet)					
Use Internet at home?		88%	(861)	57%	(407)
Hours per week of internet?					

Several new background questions were added to the 2003 questionnaire, relating to personal health, perceptions of workload, work-related stress, level of autonomy on the job, and job satisfaction. 76% of respondents reported “excellent” or “very good” health,

⁸ 45 respondents (4%) did not answer this question.

while 18%, 5% and 0.7% reported “good,” “fair” or “poor” health, respectively. However, when asked whether, in the past five years, “have there been any significant personal health changes in your life,” 35% (340) responded in the affirmative, with only 11% (36) of that group indicating that this change had been an “improvement.” By contrast, the remaining 89% (295) of this group reported that they had suffered “major illness,” “major injury,” “serious disability” or “other” (overwhelmingly negative) affliction during this period.

TABLE A-3 - Further Background Characteristics - Health Related

Health Related Characteristics	%	(N)
Health in general?	Excellent	34% (338)
	Very good	42% (409)
	Good	18% (179)
	Fair	5% (48)
	Poor	0.7% (7)
Significant change in health in past 5 years?	Yes	35% (340)
	No	65% (637)
If yes, what have these changes been related to?	Major illness	28% (93)
	Major injury	9% (29)
	Serious disability	3% (10)
	Health improvement	11% (36)
	Other	49% (163)

School-Related Characteristics of Respondents

Length of teaching experience of respondents (calculated as number of education-related work since gaining their teacher certification) ranged from 1 to 39 years, with the median being 18 years of teaching (17 years in 1998). 73% of respondents described their present position as that of classroom teacher, while 27% indicated they held other positions (school librarian, department head, consultant, student services, school administrator, etc.). 39% worked in primary schools, 11% in middle/junior schools, 32% in secondary schools of varying types, 5% in K-12 schools, 14% in other kinds of schools (adult, alternative, special needs) and non-school locations (school board or federation offices) (Note: 63 respondents [6%] did not respond to this question). Given British Columbia Ministry of Education stats of approximately 15 years teaching experience, and Ontario Pension Plan Board figures of slightly over 13 years of pension credits, it would appear that respondents to the survey are somewhat older on average than the general teaching population, and that less experienced teachers were somewhat less likely to respond to the questionnaire.

Schools in which respondents worked were located across the urban-rural landscape - 50% in and around "metropolitan areas," 32% in "smaller cities and towns," and 18% in "rural" areas. School size also varied - 23% were employed in schools under 300

students, 37% in schools between 300 and 599, 21% between 600 and 1000, and 19% in schools with over 1000 students.

TABLE A-4 - School-Related Characteristics of Respondents

School-related Characteristics of Respondents		2003	1998
		% (N)	% (N)
Status	Full-time	85% (855)	86% (637)
	Part-time	11% (106)	8.4% (62)
	Other	5% (48)	5.5% (40)
Teaching experience	Median	18 years	17 years
	Range	0 - 39 years	1 – 45 years
Position	Classroom teacher	73% (703)	71% (537)
	Other	27% (264)	29% (214)
School type	Primary	39% (379)	49% (333)
	Middle grades	11% (101)	12% (81)
	Secondary	32% (296)	34% (231)
	K-12	5% (43)	4.1% (28)
	Other	14% (132)	n/a
School location	Metropolitan	50% (474)	52% (357)
	Smaller cities and towns	32% (306)	33% (227)
	Rural/remote	18% (177)	15% (106)
School size	<300 students	23% (219)	25% (174)
	300 - 599	37% (345)	39% (267)
	600 - 1000	21% (195)	17% (119)
	>1000 students	19% (181)	19% (129)

Full-Time and Part-Time Employment - 85% of all respondents worked full-time, 10.5% were employed part-time, and the remaining 4.5% were divided among those on leave for the year, and those who had retired in the previous six months. However, gender certainly served as a marker in this regard - while over 13% of all female respondents were working part-time (13.3%), less than 3% of their male counterparts were similarly employed (2.7%).

Table A-5 - Work Status of Respondents

Work Status of Respondents			2003	1998
			% (N)	% (N)
Status	Full-time (all respondents)	Female	71% (592)	65% (411)
		Male	29% (240)	35% (225)
		Total	85% (832)	86% (636)
	Full-time (classroom-based teachers only)	Female		
		Male		
		Total		
	Part-time	Female	93% (93)	89% (56)
		Male	7% (7)	11% (7)

		Total	10% (100)	9% (63)
On Leave		Female	87% (20)	100% (20)
		Male	13% (3)	0% (0)
		Total	2.4% (48)	3% (20)
Recently retired		Female	73% (11)	45% (9)
		Male	27% (4)	55% (11)
		Total	1.5% (15)	3% (20)

APPENDIX B - FURTHER TABLES

Table B-1 - Numbers of Courses Taken/Given, by Gender, Seniority and Type of School, Full-time Classroom Teachers

Number of courses taken/given in previous 12 months			
	Mean	S.D.	N
All teachers	3.7	3.3	630
Female	4.0	3.2	440
Male	3.0	3.2	164
Elementary	4.2	3.7	313
Secondary	3.2	2.4	220
1-10 years	4.1	3.3	175
11-20 years	3.6	3.4	205
21+ years	3.5	3.1	245

Table B-2 - Numbers of Courses Taken/Given, 2003 & 1998

# of courses	2003		1998	
	%	N	%	N
1 or 2	32%	204	42%	177
3 or 4	29%	180	33%	139
5 or more	30%	188	25%	103

Table B-3 - Average Weekly Hours Spent on Courses/Workshops, by Gender, Family Status, Seniority, Type of School and Geographic Region (full-time teachers)

Gender	Mean	S.D.	Median	N
Female	6.3 hrs	12.4	2 hrs	489
Male	5.9 hrs	12.1	1 hrs	195
Total	6.2 hrs	12.3	2 hrs	684

Family Status	Mean	S.D.	Median	N
Female no kids	5.8	10.8	2	210
Male no kids	5.9	8.9	2	59
Female kids	6.7	13.5	2	272
Male kids	6.0	13.3	1	136
Total	6.2	12.3	2	677
Work status (all teachers)				
Work status (all teachers)	Mean	S.D.	Median	N
Full-time teachers	6.2	12.3	2	714
Part-time teachers	4.3	7.4	2	78
Full-time other	6.9	12.7	3	150
Part-time other	6.2	13.9	1	82
Total	6.2	12	2	1024
Teaching Experience				
Teaching Experience	Mean	S.D.	Median	N
1 - 10 yrs	8.8	15.4	2	189
11 - 20 yrs	6.6	12.6	2	229
21+ yrs	4.3	9.2	1	290
Total	6.2	12.4	2	708
Teaching Level				
Teaching Level	Mean	S.D.	Median	N
Elementary	6.0	10.7	2	344
Secondary	5.5	12.6	1	261
Total	5.8	11.5	2	605
Region				
Region	Mean	S.D.	Median	N
Atlantic	5.8	10.2	1	100
Ontario	7.0	13.8	2	369
West	5.2	10.7	1	245
Total	6.2	12.3	2	714

Table B-4 – Reasons⁹ for taking Courses and Workshops– All full-time teachers

	2003	1998
Part of a degree, diploma, certificate	18%	19%
Additional certification	20%	21%
Required by employer	27%	46%
Required by professional body	7.6%	n/a
Required by government regulation	4.1%	n/a
Required by other organizations	5.5%	28%

⁹ Note these are not mutually exclusive reasons.

Table B-5 - Time Spent on Informal Learning, by Gender, Family Status, Seniority, Type of School and Geographic Region

	2003				1998		
	Mean		Median	N	Mean	N	
	School hrs	Total hrs	Total hrs	Total	School hrs	Total hrs	Total
Full-time classroom tchrs	4.1 hrs	9.6 hrs	6 hrs	6963	4.1	10	506
Gender							
Female	4.0	9.5	6.0	471	4.0	10	486
Male	3.8	9.8	6.8	192	3.8	10	234
Family Status							
Female no kids	3.9	9.6	6.0	206	4.6	10	230
Male no kids	3.4	9.8	7.0	58	3.7	9.0	94
Female kids	4.2	9.3	6.0	259	3.5	10	256
Male kids	4.1	9.9	6.0	134	3.9	11	141
Work Status							
Full-time teachers	4.1	9.6	6.0	693	4.1	10	506
Part-time teachers	2.7	7.4	5.0	77	2.6	9.1	63
Full-time other	4.4	9.3	6.5	144	4.6	9.7	107
Part-time other	3.8	9.4	5.5	73	2.6	11	50
Teaching Experience							
1 - 10 yrs	4.4	10.5	6.25	185	4.1	11	225
10 - 20 yrs	3.9	9.2	6.0	222	4.0	9.3	198
21+ yrs	3.8	9.5	7.0	280	3.8	10	294
Type of School							
Elementary	3.9	9.6	6.0	334	4.2	10	399
Secondary	4.0 hrs	10.1	7.0	252	3.6	9.7	226
Region							
Atlantic	4.6	10.0	6.75	98	3.2	7.1	68
Ontario	4.0	9.6	6.5	358	4.1	10	387
West	3.7	9.7	6.0	237	3.2	11	270

Table B-7 - Favoured Modes of Informal Learning (all respondents)

	% response	N
Consult friend/peer/family	53%	378
Consult text or guide book	45%	319
Look on the internet	34%	240
Work it out on my own	35%	245
Consult expert or professional	28%	198
Cooperate with group or network of friends, or family members	20%	143
Other (several listed)	2%	17
Do not usually plan	0.7%	5

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