

Title: Canadian Teachers' Formal and Informal Learning Practices: A Preliminary Examination of Data from a National Teacher Survey

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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 in, including courses, workshops or conferences. Most questions replicated closely 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%.

On the basis of a preliminary analysis of the data received, 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 were examined, based on gender, age, region, elementary/secondary school placement, urban/rural residence, position in the system. Teachers reported spending an average of over eight hours per week engaged in their own 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 4 hours per week in informal learning in their workplaces, and an overall average of 10 hours per week devoted to informal learning activities generally (related to their employment, housework, community volunteer work and other general interests).

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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 - 24 hour/day, week-long diary logs kept by teachers themselves, and in-depth 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 ever were (if not more so); therefore, some reiteration of comments made in the initial 2000 report seems appropriate, along with further exploration of more recent literature, events and trends, where useful.

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 1985, 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” 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 now linked even more closely to transformations in the larger political economy of provinces and nations - a move to more globalizing, neo-liberal economies, 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 alike are increasingly being pressured to be more “competitive” in the global (education) market - in spite of increasing evidence that these connections 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 aspects of schooling - funding, governance, curriculum, resources, facilities, etc - teachers themselves seem to have been singled out for special attention, in ways which are frequently quite unlike anything that has occurred before. Traditionally, teachers have often been addressed as a 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 and when 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 pre-service or in-service (Hopkins 1969; Robinson 1971; Fleming 1972).

In the past two decades, there has been a dramatic shift from this more collective vision to one of individualization. While this theme is highly dominant in 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), 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, and 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 the "success rate" of students 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 are 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). What remain to be determined, were any of these programs to be imposed upon Canadian teachers, would be the overall parameters of such endeavours. Who would control the content and process? What would be the assumptions about necessary or important knowledge? Would they be based, and build, upon existing teacher knowledge, or otherwise?

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. While much (or most) human learning takes place incidentally, another important aspect 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, it 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, 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, for example, “Informality and Formality in Learning” (Colley et al 2004). [to be developed further]

METHODOLOGY

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. Funding for this teachers' study came entirely from the WALL SSHRC project. 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, 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 six 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.¹ In addition to

¹ 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 selected from that province, and mailed packages in March of 2004.

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 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 when they returned their questionnaire). 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.

FINDINGS

A. RESPONSE RATES

Of the 2098 forms mailed out, 1024 completed forms, or 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 speculating on how many additional forms were neither delivered nor returned), it would appear that marginally over 50% of teachers who received forms responded to them.

B. GENERAL BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Gender and Age - Of the 96% of respondents who indicated their gender, approximately three-quarters (74.3%) were women and one-quarter men (25.5%). This is a shift from the respondents in the 1998 survey, where the breakdown was 67% to 33%, a figure which then reflected closely data provided by both the Canadian Teachers' Federation and Statistics Canada (Tremblay 1997). While more recent 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 2000.²

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). By gender, women's 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.

Other Background Characteristics - 87% of all respondents indicated they were Canadian born (up slightly from 85% in 1998), and, while 94% identified English as the

² 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).

language they could express themselves in "most easily," 17% stated that they could speak at least one further language "well enough to hold a conversation." 90% identified themselves as being "White" (down somewhat from 92% in 1998) while 4% self-identified as belonging to other ethno-cultural groups (45 respondents (4%) did not answer this question). 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. 58% of all respondents had children living at home.

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, 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," 33% (338) responded in the affirmative, with only 11% (36) of that group indicating that this change had been an "improvement." By contrast, the remaining 89% (302) of this group reported that they had suffered "major illness," "major injury," "serious disability" or "other" affliction during this period.

C. 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, 10% 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).

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% with 600 and 1000 students, and 19% in schools over 1000.

Full-Time and Part-Time Employment - 85% of all respondents worked full-time, 10.5% were employed part-time, and the remaining 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%).

Teacher Workload - Full-time classroom teachers and department heads/assistant heads (n=672) reported an overall workload of 47.5 hours per week. This load is derived from

two components. First, teachers were assigned, on average (mean), 29.2 hours per week of classroom teaching and other work with students, along with such additional timetabled tasks as school administration, library coordination, 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 18.3 hours per week on school related tasks - approximately 10 hours at school, and 8 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. While the assigned timetable hours were virtually the same for both male and female teachers, women reported somewhat more extra work hours (19.1) as compared to their male counterparts (16.1), resulting in an overall weekly workload for women of 48.2 hours, and 45.5 for men. As compared to the 1998 survey report, there was a slight increase in average workloads in 2003 (47.5 vs. 47 hours per week).

Gender		Total timetabled hours	Extra hours beyond timetable	Total work hours	Extra at school	Extra at home	Extra elsewhere
female	Mean	29.11	19.11	48.23	10.21	8.43	0.47
	N	476	484	476	484	484	484
male	Mean	29.28	16.13	45.45	8.67	6.92	0.54
	N	189	188	185	188	188	188
Total	Mean	29.16	18.28	47.45	9.78	8.01	0.49
	N	665	672	662	672	672	672

These teacher workload findings are similar to studies which have asked teachers in other jurisdictions the same kinds of questions, and are also generally consistent for the past decade or more. A 1994-95 study found that Saskatchewan teachers worked slightly more than 47 hours per week (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation 1995; see also, Schaefer 2001). Similarly, a 1993-94 national study of U.S. full-time elementary and secondary public school teachers found that they were required to be at school 33 hours per week, and that they worked an additional 12 hours per week, before and after school and weekends, for a total of 45 hours per week (National Centre for Education Statistics 1997). A 1996 British study found that teachers in both primary and secondary schools worked on average 50 hours per week, with a quarter of those surveyed working more than 55 hours (National Union of Teachers 1998; see also Michelson and Harvey 1999; Drago et al 1999). [more recent data to be included]

However, when respondents were asked more specific questions about their workload, and the ways it had changed over the past five years, the responses suggested a qualitatively different set of perceptions than the quantitative data might have signalled. Over three-quarters (77%) of respondents reported that their overall workload had "significantly increased" (43%) or "increased" (34%) in the past five years (or less, if relatively new to teaching), while 19% stated it had remained about the same, and only 4% stated it had "decreased" or "significantly decreased." 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" - 81%;

“Time/effort required for assessing and reporting on student progress” - 78%; “Size of classes” - 62%; “Number of hours of other [than teaching] timetabled duties” - 46%. While the reasons for these beliefs have yet to be explored through focus groups and in-depth interviews, one could certainly speculate that having to devote more hours attending to increased bureaucratic requirements, away from student themselves, might lead teachers to conclude that the workload had increased.

Perhaps not unrelated, over 80% of all respondents reported that the “overall level of stress” in their work had “significantly increased” (43%) or “increased” (38%). When asked “how often do you find your job stressful?” over 40% responded “most” (34%) or “all” (7%) the time, while a further 46% believed that their job was stressful at least “half the time.” In spite of these pressures, however, 32% reported that they were “very satisfied” with their jobs, while a further 55% were at least “somewhat satisfied.” By comparison, only 8% were “dissatisfied” and 2% “very dissatisfied” with their job.

D. 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.. Of this group, 35% had taken one or two, 33% had taken three or four, and the remaining 32% had participated in anywhere from five to twenty such organized activities. As Table B 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 B - Taken one or more courses or workshops in the previous 12 months				
2003	1998	2003 NALL study		
All teachers	All teachers	Adult population not in school	Labour force	Labour force, degree required
90.2%	86%	31.8%	40.5%	53.55
n = 1024	752	2771	2221	535

As Table C 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, 87% 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 C - Length of teaching experience and involvement in courses - 2003 and 1998 Survey

Taken course in past 12 months by teaching experience*

Years of experience	2003		1998	
	%	N	%	N
All respondents				
1-10	94	219	89	
11-20	93	300	89	
21+	87	330	82	
Total	91	849	86	
Full-time teachers				
1-10	94	176	87	
11-20	94	205	89	
21+	86	242	83	
Total	91	623		

*Excludes those with less than one year of experience.

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. Over 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%].

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

As suggested by the following tables (Tables D to I), there were some variations in their engagement with these pursuits based upon respondent background. However, with the possible exception of part-time teachers, older teachers, and some regional variation, these differences were minimal in nature.

Table D - Formal learning activities, average hours per week per week by gender

Gender	Mean	Median	N
Female	6.26	2.00	728

Male	6.43	1.88	251
Total	6.30	2.00	979

Table E - Formal learning activities, average hours per week per week by parental status and gender

	Mean	Median	N
Female no kids	6.11	2.00	299
Male no kids	6.69	2.00	87
Female kids	6.37	2.00	429
Male kids	6.33	1.00	164
Total	6.31	2.00	978

Table F - Formal learning activities, average hours per week per week by employment position

	Mean	Median	N
Full-time teachers	6.31	2.00	709
Part-time teachers	4.30	2.00	79
Full-time other	7.01	3.00	146
Part-time other	6.36	1.00	89
Total	6.26	2.00	1024

Table G - Formal learning activities, average hours per week per week by years of teaching experience

Teaching Experience	Mean	Median	N
1-10	8.66	3.00	234
11-20	6.45	2.00	327
21+	4.60	1.31	392
Total	6.23	2.00	953

Table H - Formal learning activities, average hours per week per week by elementary/secondary

	Mean	Median	N
Elementary	5.65	2.00	479
Secondary	6.00	1.00	306
Total	5.79	2.00	785

Table I - Formal learning Activities, average hours per week by region.

Region	Mean	Median	N
Atlantic	5.67	1.00	93
Ontario	6.81	2.00	510
West	5.72	2.00	421
Total	6.26	2.00	1024

Reasons for Taking Courses and Workshops - Motivations varied for engaging in these formal courses and workshops. 21% 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 [up from 19% in 1998], while 21% [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.” 24% took one or more courses required by their employer, 7% required by a professional body, 3.5% required by “government regulation,” and 8% required by other organizations.

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 - 88% of responding teachers reported that they would definitely (57%) or possibly (31%) take one or more courses in the future (an identical figure to the 1998 report). However, only 17% 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.

Among those who were undecided, or stated that they would definitely not take further courses in the next few years, a number of reasons were cited for this reluctance [1998 responses in square brackets]: too expensive (39%) [31%]; courses held at inconvenient times and/or places (25%) [19%]; family responsibilities (42%) [18%]; no relevant courses available (13%) [17%]; lack of employer support (13%) [14%]; and health reasons (6%) [3%].

E. INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES OF 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.

a) Informal Learning in the Workplace - The questionnaire form listed a number of work-related themes around which self-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 (98%) stated that they were certainly "learning on the job." 78% 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. team-work/communication skills, teaching a particular grade/subject, classroom management, student problems, and keeping up with new teaching-related knowledge (Table J)

Table J - Areas of Informal Learning	% of respondents indicating learning	
	2003	1998
Computers	78	89
Teaching subject	63	68
Keep up with new knowledge	60	63
Classroom strategies/management	58	63
Curriculum policy	57	70
Learn about student problems	53	65
Learn team/communication skills	52	63
Teacher education/development	46	47
Employee rights benefits	43	54
Extra-curricular themes	42	n/a
Technical equipment	40	n/a
Health & safety issues	39	35
Special Ed Inclusion	38	n/a
Supervisory/management skills	27	n/a
Environmental issues related to teaching	25	29
Other work-related issues	20	n/a
Equity issues	18	21
Second language skills	9	n/a
Other work-related learning	9	n/a
N	1024	753

When asked how this informal learning took place, 70% [82% in 1998] indicated that significant amounts took place collaboratively with colleagues. In addition, 48% [63%] also stated they engage in informal workplace learning on their own. Other modes of informal learning included: interactions with students (9% [24%] of all respondents), with principals or school board administrators (10% [27%]) and with parents (4% [14%]).

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 4.0 hours per week (up slightly from 3.9 hours reported in 1998).

When asked how helpful their employment-related informal learning time had been in the previous 12 months, well over half (55%) stated it had been "very helpful" and a further 42% found it at least "somewhat helpful." Over three-quarters of all respondents 76%

confirmed that, in the previous four weeks, they had sought “advice from someone knowledgeable, with the intention of developing [their] job skills or knowledge.”

b) 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 18 hours of work per week, up from 15 hours reported in 1998. In addition, 74% indicated that these tasks involved new, informal learning experiences and that, on average, two hours per week was spent in this kind of informal learning activity. Over two-thirds (68%) of teachers responding to these questions stated they had engaged in informal learning in the area of "renovation, landscaping or gardening," closely followed by 64% who indicated new learning related to “computers or new computer skills.” Significant numbers of respondents also reported learning in the following areas: home cooking (54%); budgeting or financial management (42%); home/auto maintenance and/or repair (38%); parenting and childcare (34%); cleaning (23%); caring for the elderly (21%). 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.

c) Informal Learning in the Community - Similar to the previous questions, teachers were asked whether they were involved in volunteer community organizations, and if so, how frequently. Over three-quarters (75.2%) indicated they were engaged in such volunteer activities (a significant increase from the 61% reporting on this activity in the 1998 survey), and of this group over three-quarters (76%) stated that these activities had also provided them with an average of between one and two hours per week of informal learning opportunity. Respondents cited a number of themes which they believed they had gained knowledge and skills through informal learning, including interpersonal skills (56%); organizational or management skills (49%); fundraising (42%); communication skills (38%); increased knowledge about social, political or environmental issues (33%); technical skills (eg. First aid; coaching) (32%); computer skills (24%).

Interestingly, when asked if any of this informal, community-based learning could be applied to their paid employment, 81% of those involved expressed concurrence - with most stating that this learning was directly related to school-based education and teaching practices.

d) Other Informal Learning Opportunities - Finally, teachers were asked if, in the past year, they had engaged in any recreational activities, either alone or with others, which might have occasioned informal learning of things they couldn't do, or didn't know, a year previous. A number of possibilities were listed for their consideration. 95% of all respondents indicated they had engaged in learning in this way. Health and well being rated highest, with 58% of all respondents reporting informal learning in that area. Three other themes were also each selected by approximately half of respondents - sports or recreation; leisure and hobby skills; computers or new computing skills.

Related to these matters, it is certainly interesting to note that 95% of all respondents stated that they used computers at home (up from 86% in 1998), for an average (median) [*need mean*] of 3 hours per week of computing time (up from 2 hours). In addition, 89%

of respondents (53%) also reported using Internet as well (up from 53% in 1998), for an extra two hours per week.

e) Total Informal Learning - As indicated in the following tables, respondents engaged in informal learning for an average of approximately 10 hours per week, four hours at the workplace and six hours at home and in the community. As the tables demonstrate, while gender alone seems not to suggest differences in amount of time spent on learning, when family status is also factored in, gender differences become more apparent. Regional differences are also apparent, as well as the differences between relatively new teachers (under 11 years of experience) as compared to their more senior colleagues. Teachers overall reported only slightly less time spent on informal learning each week, than workers among the general labour force in Canada who possessed university degrees - 9.5 as compared to 10.9 hours.

Informal learning activities, average hours per week per week by gender			
Gender		Hours of Informal learning at school	Total Informal Learning Hours
female	Mean	4.0	9.2
male	Mean	3.9	10.4
Total	Mean	4.0	9.5
	N	950	950

Informal learning activities, average hours per week per week by parental status and gender			
Gender and Family Status		Hours of informal learning at school	Total Informal Learning Hours
Female no kids	Mean	3.8	9.1
Male no kids	Mean	3.5	10.2
Female kids	Mean	4.1	9.3
Male kids	Mean	4.1	10.6
Total	Mean	4.0	9.5
	N	949	949

Informal learning activities, average hours per week per week by years of teaching experience			
Years of Teaching		Hours of informal learning at school	Total Informal Learning Hours
1-10	Mean	4.4	10.4
11-20	Mean	3.8	9.0
21+	Mean	3.8	9.3
Total	Mean	4.0	9.5

N		926	926
Informal learning activities, average hours per week per week by region			
Region of Canada		Hours of informal learning at school	Total Informal Learning Hours
Atlantic	Mean	5.0	10.0
Ontario	Mean	4.0	9.8
West	Mean	3.8	9.3
Total	Mean	4.0	9.6
	N	986	986

F. 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.” As the table below states, consulting someone else elicited the highest response (52%), with consulting a text/guide book figured almost as highly (48%).

Favoured Mode of Informal Learning		
	% response	N
Consult friend/peer/family	52	519
Consult text or guide book	48	475
Look on the internet	35	352
Work it out on my own	33	327
Consult expert or professional	29	288
Cooperate with group or network of friends, or family members	22	216
Other (several listed)	2	17
Do not usually plan	1	9

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.

Favoured Mode of Learning - Formal vs. Informal		
	% response	N
Prefer to learn by yourself or with others in your own way	20	195
Prefer to learn by taking a course or class	11	111
Both equally	26	260
Depends upon what is being learned	53	535
Don't know	1	7

G. SUMMARY

Based upon the returns from this cross-Canada sampled survey, 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 well over 47 hours a week. 39 of these hours were spent in school, working directly with students and undertaking related tasks such as preparation, marking, supervision, administration, etc. An additional eight and a half hours of directly related school work were spent each week in their homes. These figures are virtually identical 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 two-thirds (65%) 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 40.5% were similarly involve, or even as compared to those working in positions requiring university degrees, where only 54% engaged in any formal learning in the past year. Among teachers, 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, only 17% of teachers in this survey responded similarly. This finding will be explored further in the focus group phase of the project.

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. Over 98% 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.

Overall, 90% of Canadian teachers are engaged in further education, as compared to only 53% of workers in the general labour force who require a university degree for employment. By comparison, teachers are slightly less likely to engage in 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.

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