



The contribution of personality traits and emotional experience to teachers' sense of self-efficacy

As Sutton and Wheatley (2003) pointed out there is surprisingly little recent research of teachers' emotional life: about the role of emotion in learning to teach, how teachers' emotional experience influence their teaching practices, how context of teaching interact with teachers' emotions, how teachers regulate their emotions etc. Contrary, it seems reasonable to assume teachers' emotions influence teachers, teaching and students. Teachers' emotional experience could be crucial for successful teaching-learning process. Generally, research results from other psychology fields (and from rare research of teachers' emotion) suggests strong potential emotional influence on teachers' cognition (e.g. attention, memory, problem solving, decision making), motivation (e.g. intrinsic motivation, efficacy beliefs, expectancy, goals, attributions) and behavior (e.g. instructional strategies, classroom management, assessment practice).

Because psychological and emotional arousal could contribute to a feeling of capability or incompetence, feelings of joy or pleasure a teacher experiences from teaching could increase their sense of efficacy. On the other side, high levels of stress or anxiety associated with a fear of losing control could result in lower self-efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2006). A growing body of empirical evidence indicated that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are related to the effort teachers spend in teaching, the goals they set, their persistence and their resilience in spite of problems (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998).

Thus it seems that a positive emotional experience may contribute to the teachers' self-efficacy, and furthermore, their motivation and commitment to the job.

In addition, there are many areas in teaching profession which could be potentially affected by the teachers' personality (Ozel, 2007). Because individuals differ in their disposition to experience certain emotions (Revelle and Scherer, 2008), it could be proposed that teachers' emotional experience would be affected by their personality traits. Also, it is possible that certain personality types may exhibit better self-efficacy.

Therefore, the aim of this research was to examine the relationships between teachers' personality traits, emotions experienced at work and different aspects of their self-efficacy. In particular, we try to investigate whether teachers' personality traits and emotional experience are predictive for their sense of self-efficacy (including testing of independent contribution of these two groups of predictors). Previous studies of teachers' emotions were generally more focused on negative emotions (e.g. stress, anger, frustration), while less attention was given to the role of positive emotions (except for job satisfaction). That is why this research is focused on the contribution of both, positive (happiness, proud) and negative (unhappiness, humiliation) emotions, to teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

METHODS

The participants were 75 primary school teachers (66 female) from nine primary schools in Zadar, Croatia. First, teachers answered questions about their gender, age and job satisfaction (on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 - not at all to 5 - completely). After that three self-report questionnaires were applied (in random order):

Teachers' sense of efficacy scale (Tschannen-Morgan and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) – The Croatian adaptation of Teachers' sense of efficacy scale was used to measure teachers' sense of efficacy in three dimensions: classroom management (8 items, Cronbach alpha 0,91), engaging students (8 items, Cronbach alpha 0,89) and instructional strategies (8 items, Cronbach alpha 0,81).

Freiburg Personality Inventory (FPI) is self-report questionnaire based on the theory of personality initially postulated by Cattell (Fahrenberg, Hampel and Selg, 2008). It consists of ten standard scales (life satisfaction, social orientation, achievement orientation, inhibitedness, excitability, aggressiveness, strain, somatic complaints, health concerns and frankness) and two secondary scales (extraversion and emotionality). Subjects have to agree or disagree with each of the total of 138 items. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for subscales ranges from 0,71 to 0,84.

The Emotional Experience Scale (Sorić, 2002) was originally developed for measuring participants' temporary emotional state. The scale consists of 48 adjectives-items which describe different emotions (e.g. satisfied, good, unhappy, proud, etc.) and participants assess how they feel at that moment. In present research, an instruction was altered and participants assessed how they usually feel while doing their teaching job in the school (on a 5-point scale ranging from 1-never to 5-always). For purpose of this study results on subscales which measure emotional experiences of happiness, pride, unhappiness and humiliation were analyzed (Cronbach alphas were 0.94, 0.82, 0.84 and 0.90, respectively).

RESULTS

Table 1. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses with Dimensions of Teachers' Sense of Efficacy as Criteria and Personality Traits and Emotional Experiences as Predictors

Predictors	Teachers' Sense of Efficacy		
	Efficacy in Student Engagement	Efficacy in Instructional Practices	Efficacy in Classroom Management
Step 1			
<i>(Personality Traits)</i>			
Life Satisfaction	0.31*	0.14	0.24
Social Orientation	0.02	-0.02	0.03
Achievement Orientation	0.22	0.39**	0.22
Inhibitedness	-0.29*	-0.22	-0.28*
Excitability	0.13	0.14	0.22
Aggressiveness	0.03	-0.10	-0.04
Strain	0.19	0.01	0.05
Somatic Complaints	0.12	0.11	0.04
Health Concerns	-0.10	-0.05	-0.09
Frankness	-0.24	-0.26*	-0.14
R ²	0.38**	0.37**	0.28*
Step 2			
<i>(Personality Traits + Emotions)</i>			
Life Satisfaction	0.04	-0.02	0.01
Social Orientation	-0.08	-0.10	0.04
Achievement Orientation	0.09	0.26*	0.08
Inhibitedness	-0.06	-0.10	-0.08
Excitability	0.08	0.17	0.24
Aggressiveness	-0.06	-0.18	-0.05
Strain	0.34**	0.02	0.07
Somatic Complaints	-0.02	0.01	-0.05
Health Concerns	-0.05	-0.03	-0.08
Frankness	-0.24*	-0.23*	-0.09
Happiness	0.21	0.01	0.01
Unhappiness	-0.43**	-0.10	-0.21
Pride	0.43**	0.45**	0.38*
Humiliation	0.28	0.05	-0.24
R ²	0.68**	0.50**	0.54**
R ² - change	0.30**	0.13**	0.26**

The series of multiple hierarchical regression analyses showed that both groups of predictors (personality traits and emotional experiences) have made significant and independent contribution to the teachers' self-efficacy.

Total amount of explained variance for all three aspects of teachers' self-efficacy were satisfactory. Specifically, 68% variance of efficacy in engaging students, 50% variance of efficacy in instructional strategies and 54% variance of efficacy in classroom management were explained by teachers' personality traits and their classroom emotional experiences.

In addition, the results suggest a possible mediating role of teachers' emotional experiences in the relationship between their personality traits and sense of efficacy.

This research revealed the importance of more detailed research and understanding of teachers' emotional experience. It seems that providing teachers with opportunity to feel positive emotions could be effective for increasing their professional self-understanding and self-efficacy beliefs. Since empirically proved positive effects of high self-efficacy beliefs on teaching and learning, attempts for creating teaching context that promote positive emotions could have more significant contribution to successfulness of teaching process even than teachers' personality traits.