
**INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK
OF RESEARCH ON TEACHERS
AND TEACHING**

INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH
ON TEACHERS AND TEACHING

PART ONE

Springer International Handbook of Research on
Teachers and Teaching

VOLUME 21

A list of titles in this series can be found at the end of this volume.

International Handbook of Research on Teachers and Teaching

Part One

Editors

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INTRODUCTION TO THE HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Lawrence J. Saha and A. Gary Dworkin

Why a New Handbook?

The purpose of this handbook is to provide not only an update on research about teachers and teaching, but also to introduce to students, scholars and researchers new perspectives on an important educational topic which has been undergoing considerable change over the past several decades. No one questions the centrality of teachers and their activities for learning processes at all levels of educational systems. However wide variations exist as to how teachers function in educational systems, and also about the various ways in which they carry out their teaching duties. Teachers have been bound with traditional notions of what is required to teach and the best practices for teaching. Also there have been traditional notions of the teacher's role with respect to their administrative superiors, to students and to parents which have been followed over many decades, and across many countries and cultures. However in the last two decades, changes have occurred which have radically altered these traditional notions of teachers' roles or their practices of teaching. New and emerging teacher roles and relationships with educational stakeholders necessitate a careful inspection of what we know about teachers and their practice of teaching. This New Handbook represents a collective effort to examine the results of these changing conditions in education.

The Changing Nature of the Teaching Profession

In traditional settings the teacher occupied a privileged position not only in the classroom, but also in the wider community. The teacher was often the most educationally qualified adult person in the school community, and the teachers' activities were rarely questioned (Lortie, 1975). If students did not do well, it was their fault, and poor performance or failure was seen as a fair assessment of the abilities of the student. The school principals, although in positions of authority, nevertheless gave unquestioned support to their teachers. Student performance was often idiosyncratic to individual schools, and there was an assumption that the assessment of students

across schools was more or less equal, and that students who did well in one school would do well in any other school.

The process of teaching and learning has traditionally taken place within a political and economic context where education was considered a public good and the responsibility of the State. Particularly at the primary and secondary levels, it was assumed that the returns to public investment in education would provide far greater returns to society generally. However, as the levels of educational attainment in societies became higher, and as the standards of living continually improved, the cost of education to the State increased to the point where some assurance of value for money could be guaranteed. Furthermore, it also became clear that much of the return for investment to education accrued to the individual in the form of private returns, as compared to public returns. This increasingly became clear at the tertiary level.

As a result of these developments, governments in many parts of the world began to resort to two strategies to minimize the increasing costs of education: (1) to demand greater accountability of teachers and education administrators to ensure more efficient and effective returns to educational investments, and (2) to devolve the costs of education as much as possible to the consumer, either in the form of increasing privatization of educational facilities, and, at the higher education levels, to charge fees to partially offset the costs to the government. Both of these strategies have had significant impact on the role, the social status, and the work conditions of teachers.

To begin with, the privileged status of teachers as professionals began to be questioned. When teachers were among the most educated persons in the community, they enjoyed the social status of a professional. Their decisions went unquestioned, because it was thought that they knew best what was best for children. This status included that of educational administrators, such as school principals, as well. Professional status, from a sociological perspective, implies a certain amount of professional autonomy and independence, and by definition, this professional status is regulated by the profession itself, and not by any outside body.

As a result of these moves toward greater accountability, the independence and autonomy of teachers have become increasingly eroded. Both school principals and teachers have become accountable not to members of their own profession, but rather to government bodies who may or may not have had experience or membership in the teaching profession. The authority of these outside monitoring bodies lies in the fact that they control the financing of education, and therefore they control the jobs and careers of the teachers themselves.

The Implications for Teachers

One of the arguments underlying this handbook is that the changes in the profession and work of teachers have had consequences. Firstly, when the professional nature of an occupation is taken away, so too is it likely that collegiality will also disappear. The increased level of insecurity which is the result of external monitoring is likely to increase the competition between teachers, which also means the greater amount of stress and the decline of a sense of social support. Therefore external accountability,

coupled with internal competition, can result in the abandonment of standards so that teachers will teach in a manner that will improve the outcomes which are most likely to favor them. In the context of external standardized exams, this could mean more “teaching to the test.”

School principals who are accountable to external forms of evaluation are more likely to be more demanding of their teachers, and have less sympathy for teachers’ problems. Principals themselves are also subject of increased job stress and burnout (Friedman, 2002), which is likely to lead to an increased level of teacher stress, and subsequent higher levels of teacher burnout and other forms of teacher disengagement. We know, for example, that school principals who are less authoritarian and more democratic are likely to have fewer teachers who burn out (Dworkin, Saha, & Hill, 2003).

However not all changes are for the worse. The training, credentialing, and continuing in-service programs, along with the development of new educational technological materials have provided teachers with additional high quality resources to enhance their skills and prepare them for increasingly diverse and challenging classrooms. There have been developments in research-based pedagogies and classroom strategies, and the science of teaching, which includes the availability of various teaching materials, that exist at a sophisticated level. Therefore, the contradictions of the present educational climates in many countries of the world have brought about dramatic changes to both teachers and teaching. It is in this context that we feel the present handbook will make an important contribution.

The handbook is divided into two volumes, the first being primarily focused on research on teachers, while the second is focused on teaching. Within each volume, there are a number of subsections which cluster the chapters around a common theme. It is not always easy to draw the distinction between teachers and teaching in the placement of chapters, and occasionally there is some overlap. This is particularly true with the final section of Volume 1, Section 6: Teachers and Teaching in Comparative Perspective. This section serves as a transition between volumes one and two.

The Structure of the Handbook: Volume I – Teachers

Section 1: Introduction to the Study of Teachers

The first volume is divided into six sections, with the final section serving as a bridge between the first volume and the second volume. The first section “Introduction to the Study of Teachers” provides a backdrop for the remainder of the first volume. Chapters in this section locate the notion of the teacher in history, and trace the past and current trends in research on teachers and teaching. Teachers have been the object of research for many decades, but we find in this section that teachers also conduct research on themselves, on their students and on their schools. However, research on teachers and on education generally, has been criticized for not being relevant or useful for policy (Biddle & Saha, 2002/2005). Nevertheless research has also shown whether and how the research knowledge about teachers and teaching actually becomes known, often through the school principals who frequently use it in their day-to-day running of their schools.

Knowledge about teachers does not speak for itself. In this section we also find an overview of the social science theories which have been used to guide and interpret research on teachers and teaching. Finally, the section would not be complete without some of the latest trends in the quantitative methods which are used for research on teachers and teaching. As these methods become more sophisticated, the quality of research and the quality of our knowledge is improved. Thus, Section 1 provides the base regarding research on teachers and teaching upon which the remainder of the volume rests.

Section 2: Becoming a Teacher

People are made into teachers; they are not born to be teachers. While some may dispute the various characteristics which identify and describe the good teacher, the fact is that the recruitment and preparation of teachers has become a central preoccupation of governments and of the educational institutions which train and certify them. In this section we find discussions of the underlying philosophy and policies which influence the training of teachers. We also find descriptions and discussions about changes in the certification and credentialing of teachers, and in particular how this has shifted from an emphasis on qualifications to an emphasis on performance. In this sense, we see the emergence of increasing accountability of teachers for the outcomes of their teaching. What is also at issue is whether the training process is ever finished. The chapters on in-service training, the role of mentors, and the notion of teaching as a lifelong learning process, further emphasize the increasing pressures on teachers to stay up-to-date on the latest developments in teaching pedagogies and teaching strategies.

The chapters in this section make it clear that a person has never really become a teacher, in the definitive sense of the word. In the current climate, teachers are always in a *state of becoming*, where new knowledge, new skills, and new classroom challenges are in a constant state of flux. Once again, as this pace of change accelerates, the pressures on teachers to be adaptive, accommodating and yet effective in their work, not only increases accountability, but also on the consequences of accountability.

Section 3: The Characteristics of Teachers

Conventional studies of teacher characteristics have focused on the types of persons recruited to, or attracted by, the profession of teaching. However in the new educational climate, some new characteristics have become important. Status as such is not new, but the nature of this social status is new. Furthermore, the quality of the knowledge, attitudes and values of teachers are now recognized as important dimensions which affect teacher behavior and performance. Finally, the potential for leadership among teachers, because of the changing nature of educational accountability, is essential.

All of these topics are treated in the chapters of this section. In addition, issues related to gender differentiation within the teaching profession are addressed, since many of the characteristics of the teaching profession are affected by gender issues. The authors in this section provide up-to-date reviews of the literature of these important topics.

Section 4: Teacher Behavior

In the new climate of increasing accountability throughout the world, teacher behavior is increasingly being scrutinized. Accountability lies not only in the academic performance of students. Other dimensions of the teacher's behavior are also important, including the teacher's impact on the classroom, the school climate, interrelationships with parents, use of textbooks, the teacher's own beliefs about students, the teacher's emotional behavior, and finally the teacher's relationships with authority. The new accountability affects all of these dimensions. In effect, the teacher lives in a fishbowl, for all to see and to evaluate.

The chapters in this section address issues not found in other handbooks, and therefore many hitherto unexplored aspects of teacher behavior are covered. Researchers and students will find a wealth of insight and information in these chapters, and many new ideas which themselves require further research will make important contributions to ways in which teachers are understood, and need to be understood in the present climate.

Section 5: Teacher Life-Cycles

Like all other occupations and professions, the teaching profession has its own stages, or life-cycles through which all or most all teachers pass through as they work their way through their careers. The chapters in this section describe a number of aspects of these life-cycle stages, starting with the extent to which teachers are "tracked" as they are assigned to different classes. Also the life cycle of teachers is intertwined with the nature of teacher work, and the power and the authority which teachers possess. Their salaries are tied up with unions, and promotions become increasingly complicated because of increasing monitoring and accountability. The increase in pressures on teachers does raise the possibility of burnout and the loss of enthusiasm for their work. Overall these conditions relating to teachers pose issues for both teachers and for administrators, particularly as the demands for teachers increase. These chapters provide important insights and up-to-date information about these aspects of teachers today.

Section 6: Teachers and Teaching in Comparative Perspective

A comparative perspective adds to our understanding of both teachers and teaching, since we have the opportunity of seeing the profession in different cultural and social contexts. The chapters in this section do provide us with this opportunity. Not only do we have overviews of the profession across societies, but we also are able to understand how the major difference between Eastern and Western cultures affect the nature of teachers and the conditions of teaching. The chapters on teaching in Africa and also in Cyprus also provide important comparisons about how different cultural contexts create challenges for teachers. This section forms a bridge between the first and second volumes, as it examines both teachers and teaching cross-culturally, and comparatively.

Volume II – Teaching

It stands to reason that if the career conditions of teachers have changed, and also their attitudes, values and beliefs, then so too will the ways that they teach. There are a number of pedagogies which guide the teaching styles of teachers. In many ways, these are the theories that teachers hold, explicitly or implicitly, which affect all aspects of their teaching behavior. These theories are not only influenced by teacher beliefs about their students, but they are also influenced by their in-school experiences, and these can include the changing nature of work conditions and other sources of accountability, whether these be the external assessment of students, or direct measures of teacher effectiveness (Marland, 1994). It is therefore relevant to give attention to these changing aspects of teaching practice. This is the focus of Volume 2.

Section 7: The Dimensions of Teaching

The chapters in Section 7 highlight the various aspects of teaching which help understand issues related to classroom behavior. The chapters range from an examination of teaching styles, as learned in the process of teacher training, to considerations of how to create productive learning environments in contemporary classrooms in which diversity among students has become an increasing reality. Related to this latter issue are the considerations of justice and ethics in classroom settings, particularly the concerns about the ways that students are assessed and treated by teachers. This section ends with a consideration of a much researched topic, namely the expectations that teachers hold of their students. Even with the abundant research on this topic, there is much more to understand, particularly given the changing nature of teaching conditions.

Section 8: Teaching in the Classroom

Section 8 continues the topic of Section 7, but directs attention more specifically to classroom conditions. The articles in this section focus on more specific aspects of the classroom context, such as the actual interaction between teacher and student, examinations, classroom discipline, the challenge of multicultural classrooms, the size of the class, the impact of new forms of information technology, effective teaching, and finally nonverbal behavior. There are both traditional and new topics found in this section, and all chapters provide new ways of looking at classroom settings and help us understand the new challenges facing teachers.

Section 9: Teaching Specific Student Populations

Not all classrooms are alike, nor are the teaching challenges the same at various age and grade levels. Most teachers will teach students from mainstream society, and although there will be some diversity in every classroom, in some cases teachers will, either by design or by accident, teach various subgroups of young students with highly

specific needs. The articles in this section focus on teaching with specific student populations. The section begins with several chapters which focus on various grade levels, and in this case, on secondary school and tertiary student populations. But the section includes chapters on other special groups such as vocational students, gifted and talented children, at risk students, indigenous students, students in single-sex and coed classes, and finally, teaching boys, which, because of higher dropout rates and school disengagement, has become a concern in some countries. Overall, the chapters in this section point to circumstances where special teacher qualities are needed to meet the needs of unique student populations.

Section 10: The Teaching of Individual Subjects

Most handbooks on teachers and teaching have included chapters on the requirements and pedagogical styles needed for teaching various subject areas. This handbook is no different. The conventional fields of mathematics and science are represented, as are reading and history. But there are some more unusual fields which are covered, including arts education, teaching a second language, physical education and health, the teaching of social and political values, and teaching moral and pro-social development. These latter subjects help raise questions about the content of what should be taught in school, and how it should be taught. Even though the focus of much evaluation of school effectiveness is judged by mathematics, science and reading performance, the chapters in this section clearly indicate that these subjects alone do not define the full curriculum of schooling.

Section 11: Great Debates About Teachers and Teaching

The final section in this handbook includes chapters which are more or less open-ended, and which treat topics which are continually debated and remain somewhat unresolved in educational circles. These issues concern the tracking of students, high stakes testing, teacher effects as a value-added phenomenon, educational restructuring, student grade retention, and the professionalism of teachers. All of these topics are contentious and controversial. The purpose of this final section is to emphasize that the general field of teachers and teaching is not a closed book, but that it is an ever-evolving and changing phenomenon.

Conclusion: A New Beginning, not the End

The 76 chapters in this handbook represent an introduction rather than a closed compendium of what we know about teachers and teaching. The field is a large one, and it is always changing as the conditions surrounding the enterprise of education also evolve. What is more important is that as the social and educational context of teachers and teaching change, so do areas and topics for research. Clearly, continuing research needs to be conducted on the teachers and their teaching behavior. But replication and repetition are not enough; new directions are needed to address the complex conditions which

are emerging which are radically altering teachers and teaching as both professions and as jobs. Furthermore, change also brings about conflict and stress, and the consequences of these conditions also need to receive research attention.

What is perhaps most important is that these developments regarding teachers and teaching are not unique to specific countries. In many ways they are part of a larger global process whereby education systems participate in similar patterns of institutional structures and educational practices (Spring, 2008). The conditions of teachers and teaching have become common across national boundaries so that uniformity rather than diversity dominates the practices which contribute to the accountability movements which have had such a striking impact. Therefore the audience to which these chapters speak is an international one, and the findings are relevant at both national and international levels. Presumably, the understanding and the research which might be stimulated by these chapters will also have international significance.

Biographical Notes

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Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., 2002). Dworkin (with Rosalind J. Dworkin) wrote three editions of *The Minority Report*, a race, ethnic, and gender relations book (3rd edition published by Wadsworth 1999). Among some of his earlier books on teachers and teaching are *Teacher Burnout in the Public Schools* (SUNY Press, 1987), *When Teachers Give Up* (Hogg Foundation/Texas Press, 1985) and *Giving Up on School* (with Margaret D. LeCompte, Corwin/Sage Press, 1991).

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