

## **Public School Teachers' Religiousness and Sense of Efficacy in Dealing with Professional Challenges**

Each teacher faces professional difficulties and brings his/her own personality in dealing with those problems. One aspect of many teachers' personalities is religious identity. Religious beliefs inspire some people to choose to become teachers and those teachers rely on their faith in maintaining their vocations. Nevertheless, little systematic research exists regarding potential influences of teachers' personal religiousness on their professional lives.

The purpose of the study is to explore the relationship between teachers' religiousness and their sense of efficacy in dealing with professional challenges. The research questions are 1) how do teachers perceive their religious beliefs? And 2) what is the relationships between teachers' efficacy perceptions in managing professional difficulties and their personal religiousness?

The data for this proposal were collected as a part of a larger mixed methods research study. In 2006, 68 early childhood teachers in five public elementary schools in Tennessee were surveyed by using a combination of four instruments including Duke Religion Index, Teacher Spiritual/Religious Survey, Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale, and Teacher Self-efficacy Scale.

The sample's religiousness was found to be very high in three domains: organizational, non-organizational, and intrinsic religiousness. The results of a series of ANOVA revealed that the teachers' organizational religiousness and intrinsic religiousness had significant effect on their efficacy perception.

This research suggests implications for research and practice in pursuing comprehensive teacher development. Further research should be continued to explore the dynamics of teachers' individual religiousness, professional beliefs, and practices.