



Stronger Smarter Institute Research & Impact Footprinting

Reading Review

“Adaptive and maladaptive work-related motivation among teachers”

Stronger Smarter Meta-Strategy links:

1. Acknowledging, embracing and developing a positive sense of identity in schools → 2. →3. High Expectations Relationships → 4. Innovative and Dynamic School Models →5. Innovative and dynamic school staffing models

This Reading Review looks at a 2017 article by Rebecca Collie and Andrew Martin, both researchers in Educational Psychology at the University of New South Wales.

The authors undertook an analysis involving surveys of 519 Australian teachers from 18 schools on the positive and negative dimensions of teacher motivation. The aim of the study was to identify major motivational profiles among teachers and determine how the profiles are associated with teachers’ wellbeing. The results showed significant differences across the profiles. Collie & Martin (2017b), say that ‘*Taken together, the results shed light on how teachers are motivated to do their work, and the implications for their workplace wellbeing.*’

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Research questions and approach

This review provides a short overview of the findings of the research together with a discussion about how the findings related to the Stronger Smarter Metastrategies. The authors of the research have also provided a review of their findings in the October 2017 edition of Teacher Magazine (Collie & Martin, 2017, b).

The aim of the research was to further advance the current knowledge around how motivation drives teachers' actions in the classroom and underpins the quality of their work. The researchers also looked at the link between a teacher's motivation and their experience of wellbeing.

The authors used Covington's 1992 model of need achievement to guide the study. Covington's model is based on the idea that promotion of one's self-worth is a high priority and it drives two key motivational factors:

- ▶ **Failure avoidance** – efforts to avoid performing poorly.
- ▶ **Success orientation** – efforts to achieve highly.

The authors provide this example. In the classroom, student misbehaviour may lower a teachers' sense of their ability to manage the classroom, whereas exemplary student results may raise a teacher's sense of their own effectiveness. Covington's model looks at how the two motives of success orientation and failure avoidance interact.

The authors note that previous work overseas has shown that adaptive motivation (i.e. success orientation), tends to be associated with positive outcomes such as teachers' well-being and student's motivation, whereas the opposite is often true for maladaptive motivation (i.e. failure avoidance, anxiety and lack of control). They state that research is increasingly looking at the adaptive motivations, but less research has been focused on understanding maladaptive motivations. Details of the adaptive and maladaptive motivation factors and associated wellbeing outcomes are shown in Figure 1.

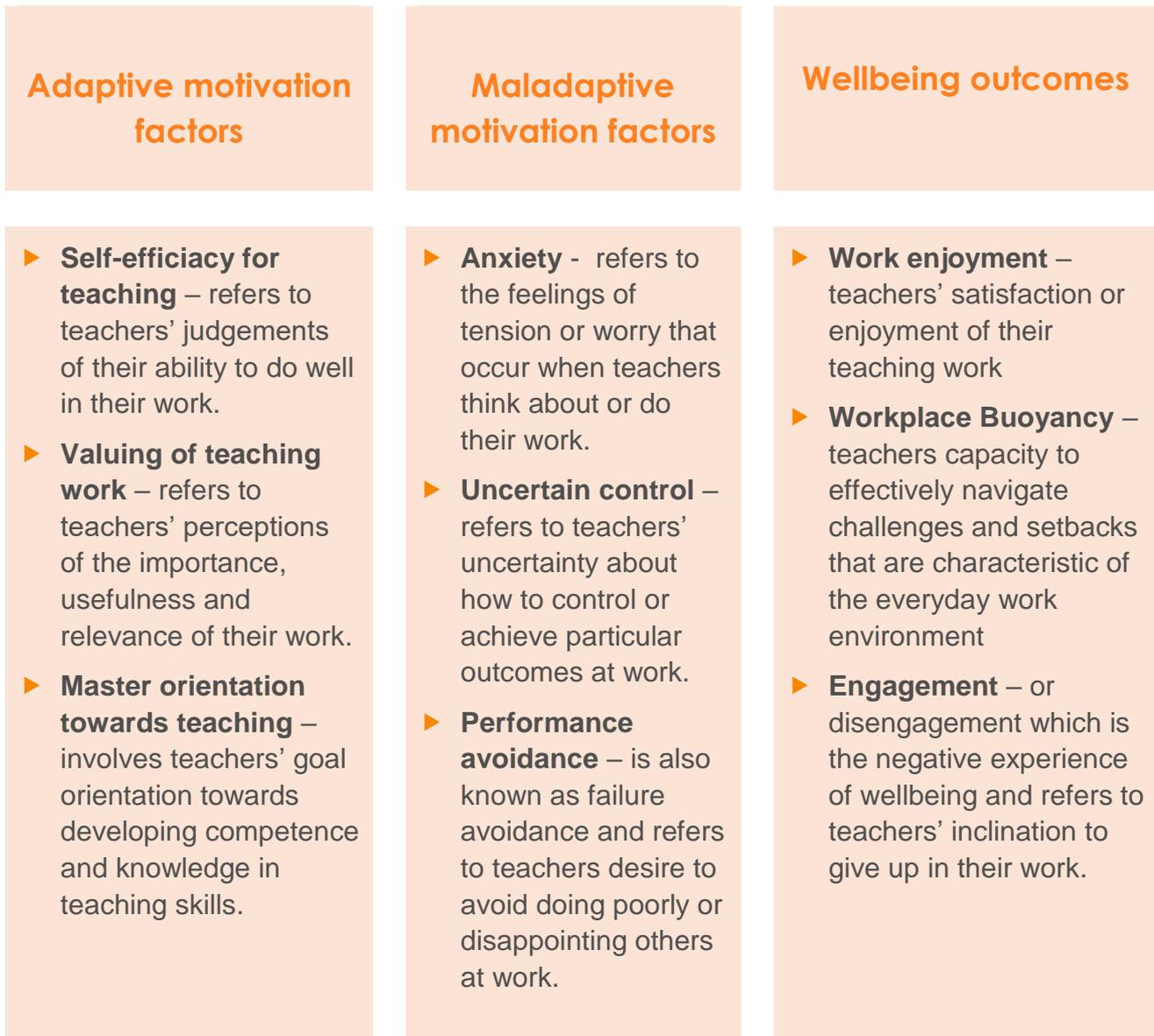


Figure 1: Adaptive and maladaptive motivation factors and wellbeing outcomes.

Motivational Profiles

The authors undertook their research by asking participants to complete a questionnaire in meetings or professional development sessions. Collie and Martin's paper provides full details of the measures used and a full analysis of the results, but these are not discussed here. In this review, we provide a general discussion of their profile interpretation.

Collie and Martin's research led them to develop five profiles (a slight variation to the four profiles of Covington's model). The five profiles are

1. Failure accepting profile
2. Failure Fearing
3. Amotivated (or Unmotivated)
4. Success Seeking
5. Success Approach

They describe how the answers to the survey allowed them to place respondents into one of the five profiles as shown in Figure 2.

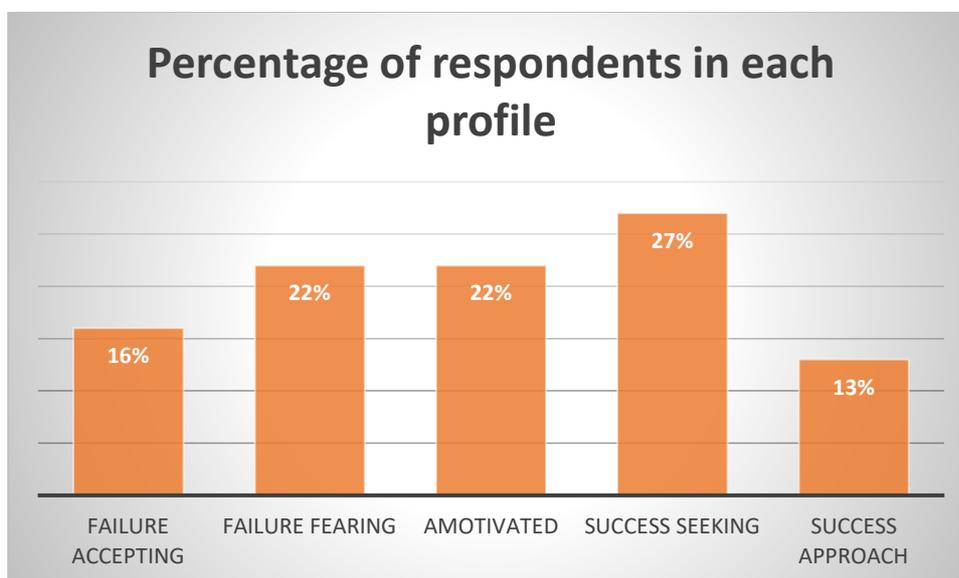
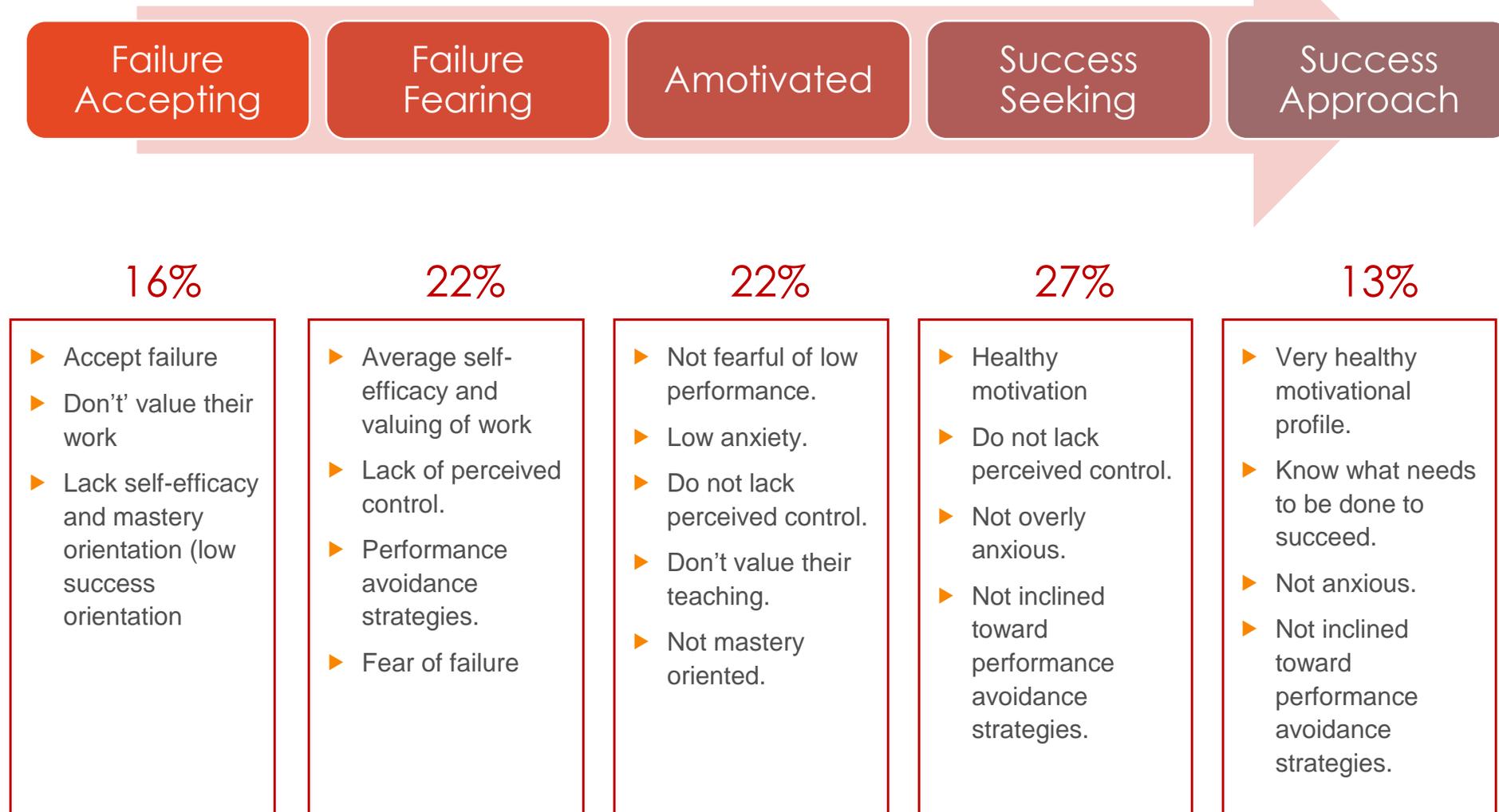


Figure 2: Percentage of respondents in each of the five motivation profiles

Details of each profile are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Teacher motivation profiles (Collie & Martin, 2017)



The authors provide a few notes on the results:

- ▶ Male teachers were between two or three times more likely to have a failure accepting profile than a success approach.
- ▶ Teachers with greater experience were more likely to have a failure accepting profile than a success seeking profile.
- ▶ Teachers at secondary level were around two times more likely to have a success seeking profile than a success approach profile.
- ▶ Older teachers were marginally more likely to have a success seeking profile or amotivated than failure fearing.

Taken together, they state that male teachers, experienced teachers and younger teachers were more likely to have membership in the less positive profiles.

Wellbeing

The authors then go on to look at the correlation of the profiles with teacher wellbeing. Figure 4 is taken from the article in Teacher Magazine (Collie & Martin, 2017b) and shows the wellbeing for each profile.

Success profiles: Their research shows clearly that the two success profiles (success approach and success seeking) are associated with

- ▶ Higher levels of work enjoyment
- ▶ Higher levels of workplace buoyancy
- ▶ Lower levels of work disengagement.

The authors state that the positive outcomes in the two success profiles are likely to be because these teachers have confidence in their abilities and a sense of control over their work. They are motivated to develop mastery in their work and are not overly anxious.

Failure profiles: Equally the failure fearing and failure accepting profiles were associated with low levels of work enjoyment and workplace buoyancy and high levels of work disengagement.

However, in the failure accepting profile, workplace buoyancy is higher than in the failure fearing profile. The authors suggest that if teachers in the failure accepting profile have 'given up' they may not be so affected by the pressure of their work making their workplace buoyancy higher than those who still fear poor performance.

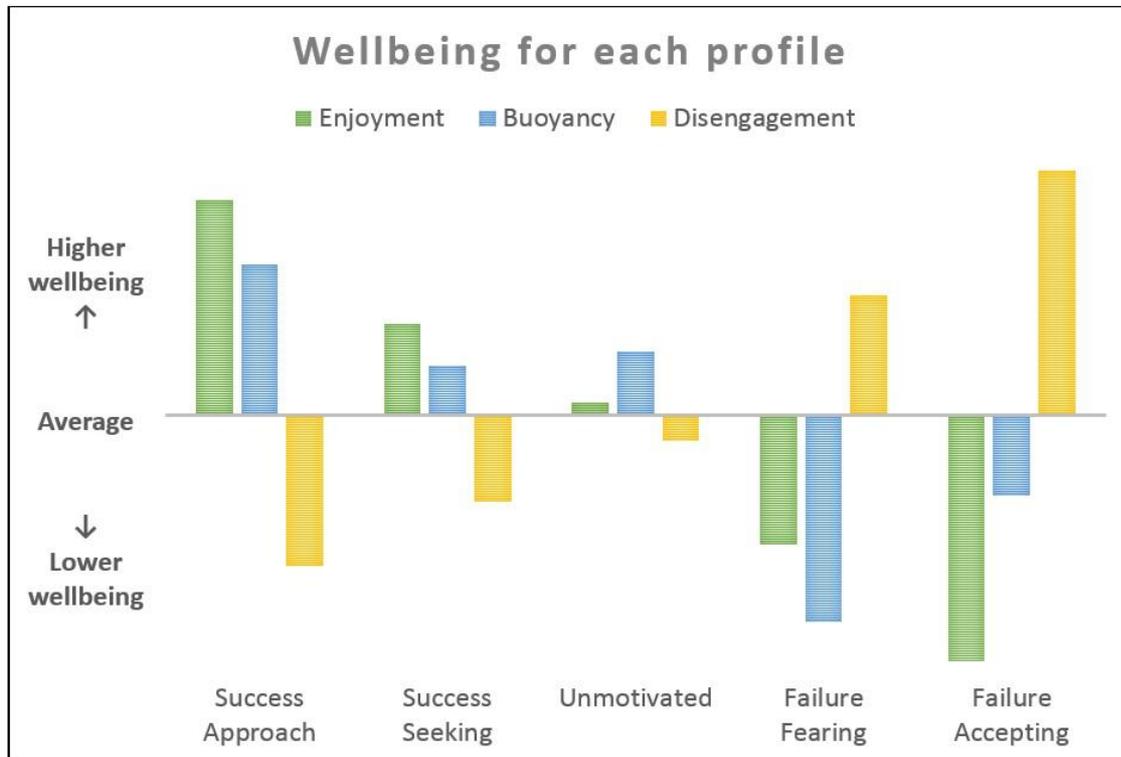


Figure 4: Wellbeing for each profile. Diagram from Teacher Magazine <https://www.teachermagazine.com.au/articles/teacher-motivation-profiles-and-how-they-impact-wellbeing>).

Areas for future research

The authors note a few limitations of their research

- ▶ Although they had a fairly large sample size, replication with different samples is important for future research.
- ▶ They focused on motivation for teaching in general and suggested that future research could explore specific aspects of teaching work such as classroom management, student engagement.
- ▶ They note that their data was self-reported, and it would be interesting to obtain other (e.g. principal) reports of teachers' wellbeing to see whether the same associations with wellbeing are evident.

Stronger Smarter Provocations and Discussion

This section provides a general discussion of Collie and Martin's findings, particularly in relation to the Stronger Smarter Approach and Metastrategies.

Addressing maladaptive motivation:

A significant finding from this study is that 60% of teachers in the sample group fell into the amotivated and failure-related profiles. This clearly suggests that discussion of factors influencing teacher motivation deserves greater attention. The researchers suggest that effective professional development is one way to provide teachers with self-efficacy and valuing of their work. They warn, however, that if these efforts don't address the maladaptive motivation, they may not be effective in the long-term if teachers lack perceived control, feel anxious or fear poor performance.

The Stronger Smarter Approach is centred around improving teacher efficacy as key to improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students, and the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program addresses the maladaptive motivation. In relation to Indigenous students, our westernised Australian education system has effectively endorsed the fact that it is acceptable to be in a failure profile – in other words it is acceptable to be in a deficit paradigm where the locus of control doesn't lie with the teacher, leading to a belief that an Indigenous student won't perform as well as others. We want to be clear that this discussion is not about putting blame on teachers. The Stronger Smarter Approach is very clearly about putting a spotlight on our Australian education system and the impact of its underlying desire that Indigenous students should 'fit in' to a westernised system, and about bringing the locus of control back to the educator.

In terms of Indigenous education, we recognize the reasons why the failure motivation profiles may be happening. The Stronger Smarter Approach is about ways to move educators into the positive motivational profiles by building relationships within the school to provide more supportive environments and to draw on the expertise of Indigenous workers.

Collective teacher efficacy – a whole of school response

The researchers indicate that more experienced teachers were slightly more likely to be in the less positive profiles. For Indigenous students, there is the possibility that the more experienced teacher who has been there for a while has reached a point of 'giving up', where nothing seems to work. The Stronger Smarter Approach (Stronger Smarter Institute, 2017) is about ensuring a whole of school response. A single teacher on their own will struggle to make a difference for their Indigenous students if they are surrounded by other staff in failure profiles.

Jenni Donohoo (2017) describes collective teacher efficacy (CTE), which refers ‘to a staff’s shared belief that through their collective action they can positively influence student outcomes, including those who are disengaged and/or disadvantaged. She says that educators with high efficacy show greater effort and persistence and a willingness to try new things. In other words, they are likely to be in the success approach profile. Donohoo says that when collective efficacy is present, educators are better placed to foster positive behaviour in students and raise students’ expectations of themselves.

Donohoo goes on to suggest a few of the things that can enable CTE to flourish. These include a leadership that protects teachers from issues that detract from their teaching time and provides common goals. It also includes a collegiate staff environment where teachers are able to participate in school-wide decisions, and have opportunities to discuss practice, and where there is cohesion where teachers agree with each other on fundamental issues. This is the type of staff environment that we describe as a High-Expectations Relationships staff environment (Stronger Smarter Institute, 2014,2017).

Ensuring the intervention is effective

Donohoo (2017) notes that on top of the leadership and staff cohesion, there also needs to be effective systems of intervention. Any school intervention (e.g. attendance or behaviour management strategies or a curriculum approach) that brings teachers together towards a common goal with high expectations is likely to increase teacher motivation. However, it is important to make sure the intervention does more than just improve teachers perceived control to make a difference and motivate teachers to work together towards common high expectations.

The Stronger Smarter Approach is based on a belief that any intervention needs to be strength-based and include a positive culture identity for students when considering strengths. We cannot simply consider the ‘strengths’ endorsed by a western education system but must recognise the strengths that all students bring to the classroom. When an intervention is built around high-expectations relationships to bring about staff cohesion and recognises the strengths all students bring to the classroom, we believe it is much more likely to produce successful outcomes for students.

Remote schools and Indigenous education

The other aspect of the research of interest to Indigenous education is that young teachers were less likely to be in the positive profiles. It would be interesting for further research to unpack the complexities of teacher profiles in relation to Indigenous students and remote areas. Many remote schools have young teachers, who it might be reasonable to expect to be in the success seeking groups when they first start teaching.

At the Stronger Smarter Institute, we see many highly motivated young teachers working in remote schools. However, a young teacher can easily be influenced by negative discourse in the staff room. Our education system needs to ensure that these young teachers are supported to move into a success approach profile. If the school itself is in the amotivated or failure accepting profile with regard to Indigenous education, then inevitably this will impact on the motivation of an individual teacher who finds that, on their own, they are not able to make the difference they had hoped to make.

There may also be other factors that influence the motivation profiles of young teachers. Mayer, 2010 (cited in Bahr, 2016) led a project called Studying the effectiveness of teacher education. They found that graduates are more positive about their teacher education if they have a permanent teaching position – suggesting perhaps that graduates in temporary positions feel generally less certain about their role as a teacher. They also found that school principals consistently rated graduates as being more effective than the graduates rated themselves.

Relationship with teacher-student relationships.

Aldrup, Klusmann & Ludtke (2016) looked at wellbeing in early career teachers. They found that emotional exhaustion was higher when teachers felt less competent, and that work enthusiasm was higher when teachers felt more related to their students and more competent.

We discuss in our companion reading review, Prof Nan Bahr's report for ACER *Building quality in teaching and teacher education*, how teacher-student relationships are shown to be a key component of teacher quality. We believe that focusing on building high quality relationships and focussing on professional accountabilities to build confidence, agency and self-belief in teachers will help teachers move through the success profiles. As Aldrup, Klusmann & Ludtke (2016) show, this will also then have an impact on teacher wellbeing.

Stronger Smarter Metastrategies

The Stronger Smarter Metastrategies can help build teacher confidence and teacher efficacy to move teachers up through the failure profiles and into the success profiles when it comes to Indigenous education.

▶ **Metastrategy 1: Promoting a positive sense of student identity.**

Removing deficit language and taking strength-based approaches has the potential to move educators away from a mindset where they feel everything is beyond their control. The Stronger Smarter Leadership Program focuses on building confidence and supporting educators to become agents of change – in other words to move into the Success Approach profile, particularly with regard to Indigenous students.

▶ **Metastrategy 2: Indigenous leadership.**

Embracing Indigenous leadership and building strong relationships with the local community can help to provide educators with the support they need – recognising the strengths in the community and building partnerships in the education of our Indigenous students.

▶ **Metastrategy 3: High Expectations Relationships.**

High Expectations Relationships can support educators to build better relationships with their students and also help to build a collegiate staff environment where everyone is working towards a shared understanding of expectations and outcomes. A positive work environment where everyone works as collaborators and co-learners, understanding their role in working towards shared goals, is likely to improve teacher motivation.

▶ **Metastrategies 4 and 5: Innovative school and staffing models.**

A whole school approach where the school leadership has developed visible strategies for school improvement are again likely to support educators to move into success motivation profiles.

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