

Does teacher motivation matter for students' educational outcomes? A closer look at teachers' competence beliefs and self-efficacy

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Donnerstag, 09. März 2023, 16:00 - 18.00 Uhr

Zentrum für Lehrer*innenbildung
Porzellangasse 4, 1090 Wien, Stiege 2, 3. Stock, Seminarraum 4

Abstract

Teachers' motivational beliefs, such as teachers' perceived teaching competence and self-efficacy, can shape their professional decision-making and approaches to teaching. However, theorized associations with student outcomes remain elusive. To help clarify these puzzling results, I will first review different conceptualizations of teachers' competence beliefs and their hypothesized effects on students, and I will focus in particular on student-reported classroom processes and outcomes in authentic K-12 classrooms (Lauerman & Butler, 2021; Lauermann & ten Hagen, 2021; ten Hagen & Lauermann, 2022). Next, I will present new evidence on within-class heterogeneity of teachers' competence/self-efficacy beliefs ("Can I teach this student?," ten Hagen & Lauermann, 2022) and its potential to explain teachers' differential treatment of students who attend the same classroom (ten Hagen & Lauermann, 2022; under review). This program of research points to considerable ambiguity concerning the conceptualization and assessment of teachers' competence beliefs in empirical research. Furthermore, there is a paucity of empirical evidence testing central assumptions about the associations between different types of beliefs about teaching competence, mediating processes such as instructional quality, and student outcomes in authentic K-12 settings. Finally, within-class heterogeneity of teachers' motivational beliefs and students' educational outcomes has been insufficiently considered in empirical research. I will conclude with a discussion of open questions and directions for future research.