



Teacher interpersonal behaviour and student motivation in competence-based vocational education: Evidence from Indonesia



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Perceived teacher interpersonal behaviour (TIB) predicts student motivation.
- TIB connects competence-based education (CBE) and student motivation.
- Impact of TIB on student motivation is greater in less-CBE than in CBE context.

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ABSTRACT

Competence-based education requires changing teacher roles probably affecting teacher–student interactions and student motivation. This study examines how students ($N = 1469$) from competence-based and less-competence-based vocational schools perceive their teachers' interpersonal behaviour and its relation with their motivation. Results showed comparable teacher profiles in CBE and less-CBE schools, with an unexpected difference at the dimension level. Perceived teacher interpersonal behaviour moderated connections between CBE and student motivation, with greater impact in less-CBE than in CBE learning environments. Required changes in teacher roles are not yet perceived, hampering the expectations of increased motivation in competence-based education.

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1. Introduction

Researchers in classroom learning environments have indicated the importance of teacher–student relationships in achieving student outcomes. Healthy teacher–student relationships are a prerequisite for engaging students in learning activities (Brekemans, Sleegers, & Fraser, 2000). Researchers have investigated teacher–student relationships using an interpersonal perspective, that is studying teaching in terms of the relationship between teacher and students (Brok, 2001). Using this perspective, studies show that the way students perceive their teacher interpersonally (teacher interpersonal behaviour) relates to students' academic achievement (e.g., Brok, 2001; Goh & Fraser, 1998), attitude towards learning (e.g., Brok, Levy, Brekermans, & Wubbels, 2005; Gupta & Fisher, 2011;

Henderson & Fisher, 2008; Telli, den Brok, & Cakiroglu, 2007; van Uden, Ritzen, & Pieters, 2014), and students' learning motivation (Maulana, Opdenakker, den Brok, & Bosker, 2011; Maulana, Opdenakker, Stroet, & Bosker, 2013; Opdenakker, Maulana, & den Brok, 2012). Numerous studies have been done using the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI) and have involved students from primary schools (e.g., Fisher, Waldrup, Dorman, & den Brok, 2007; Goh & Fraser, 1998), secondary schools (e.g., Gupta & Fisher, 2011; Maulana et al., 2011; Rickards, 1998; Rickards, den Brok, & Fisher, 2005), and higher education (e.g., Fraser, Aldridge, & Soerjaningsih, 2010) including teacher education programmes (e.g., Jong, Tartwijk, Wubbels, Veldman, & Verloop, 2013). Studies linking student perceptions of teacher interpersonal behaviour and learning outcome in vocational education are still limited (e.g., Henderson & Fisher, 2008; van Uden et al., 2014) while the number of vocational students is increasing (OECD, 2009).

In Indonesia, a limited number of studies using the QTI have been reported. Soerjaningsih, Fraser, and Aldridge (2002) explored the use of QTI in investigating teacher interpersonal behaviour in the

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context of Indonesian higher education. The instrument provided a valid instrument for management and computer classes. Later on, Maulana, Opdenakker, den Brok, and Bosker (2012) reported its validity for lower secondary education in Mathematics and English classes. Those studies confirm the importance of students' perception of their teachers' interpersonal behaviour for students' outcomes in Indonesia. While the QTI instrument has shown to be valid in the Indonesian context, little is known of studies using QTI to analyse teacher–student relationships in Indonesian vocational schools, particularly in competence-based education that is now rising in Indonesia. Indonesia, as is stipulated in the explanation of Indonesian Education Act No. 20 year 2003, employed the competence-based approach for its education system as a strategy to enhance its quality of education (MoNE, 2003; Utomo, 2005).

Investigating teacher–student relationships in competence-based vocational education is important since the competence-based concept in education is currently receiving more and more attention from educational researchers and practitioners worldwide (Illeris, 2009). CBE has a secured position in vocational education (Kouwenhoven, 2003) and is considered to be a powerful learning environment (De Bruijn & Leeman, 2011) for fostering learning and motivation, and better preparing students for their future (working) life. Learning environments in CBE classrooms, or CBE learning environments, typically focus on student-centred learning, and encourage students to be more self-directed and more responsible for their own career paths (Wesselink, Biemans, Mulder, & der Elsen, 2007). Consequently, CBE requires different roles of teachers and students compared to traditionally teacher-centred learning. Besides being a knowledge transmitter, teachers should also act as a coach in guiding students' learning (Biemans, Nieuwenhuis, Poell, Mulder, & Wesselink, 2004; Wesselink et al., 2007). As CBE requires different roles of teachers, differences pertaining to students' perceptions of teacher interpersonal behaviour can be expected.

CBE aims at reducing the number of students who discontinue their education programme due to loss of motivation (Wesselink, 2010). By offering a more challenging and authentic learning environment, a competence-based setting is expected to foster student motivation better than in traditionally teacher-centred education. As the way students perceive teacher interpersonal behaviour is also related to student motivation (Brok, 2001; Maulana et al., 2011) and CBE requires different roles for teachers and students, teacher interpersonal behaviour theory can provide a useful framework to give insight into how CBE objectives, i.e., student motivation, are fostered in CBE research. Further, studies concerning the connection between CBE and student motivation, which also utilize teacher interpersonal behaviour theory, have not yet been found. Thus, research on teacher interpersonal behaviour in competence-based vocational education will not only contribute to elaborating the knowledge base on teacher interpersonal behaviour in vocational education, but also to the development and successful implementation of competence-based education from the teacher–student interpersonal relationship perspective.

2. Theoretical frameworks

2.1. Competence-based learning environments and the changing roles of teachers

Competence-based education (CBE) has become a dominant trend in vocational education and training in several countries due to its expected decrease of problems in the transition from school to work and the expected positive effects on student learning and motivation (Biemans et al., 2004; Wesselink et al., 2007; Biemans et al., 2009). While competence-based

education has become a popular development, research on its design is ongoing and its operationalisation in practice (i.e., how it should look like) still remains unclear (Wesselink et al., 2007). Dutch researchers have developed a framework that defines what a competence-based curriculum and the learning environment should look like. The framework is based on literature study and delphi study with educational experts and consists of eight principles describing the essential elements that characterise competence-based Vocational Education and Training in a Dutch context (Wesselink et al., 2007). This framework has been used to investigate educational programs in the Netherlands (e.g., Wesselink, Dekker Groens, Biemans, & Mulder, 2010), East Africa (e.g., Mulder, Eppink, & Akkermans, 2011) and in Indonesia (e.g., Nederstigt & Mulder, 2011).

Sturing, Biemans, Mulder, and De Bruijn (2011) validated this model with teacher practices, which led to a refinement of the framework into ten principles of CBE: (1) The study programme is based on core tasks, working processes and competences (the qualification profile); (2) Complex vocational core problems are central; (3) Learning activities take place in different concrete, meaningful vocational situations; (4) Knowledge, skills and attitudes are integrated in learning and assessment; (5) Students are regularly assessed for various purposes; (6) Students are challenged to reflect on their own learning; (7) The study programme is structured in such a way that the students increasingly self-steer their learning; (8) The study programme is flexible; (9) The guidance is adjusted to the learning needs of the students; (10) In the study programme attention is paid to learning, career and citizenship competences (Sturing et al., 2011). These ten principles provide both insight in what should be taught in CBE (principles 1–4) and how this should be done (principles 5–10). This framework complies with five levels of CBE implementation from non-competence-based to fully competence-based study programmes. This framework promises to be a useful tool to determine to what extent a learning environment is competence-based, regarding the level of implementation of the CBE principles.

In CBE, teacher roles become more complex (Biemans et al., 2004; Seezink & Poell, 2010; Wesselink, 2010). Besides acting as knowledge transmitters, teachers are encouraged to act as coaches and as sources of information while interacting with students. Teachers are expected to develop authentic learning tasks, for example, by creating classroom situations that resemble workplace/industrial situations. As teacher and student roles in competence-based education differ from the traditional teacher-centred learning, different student perceptions of teacher–student relationships are to be expected in competence-based learning environments compared with those of non-competence-based learning environments. The characteristics of the CBE classrooms emphasise student-centred learning more strongly and require more cooperation between teachers and students. Studies show that students in more student-centred learning classrooms describe their teachers' behaviour as more helpful, friendly, understanding and less directive than in teacher-centred learning (Yu & Chen, 2012). Thus, those behaviours are expected to be shown more often in CBE than in the less-CBE schools. This, in turn, can be expected to differentially influence student learning and motivation in CBE as compared to non-CBE contexts. The large body of research on teacher interpersonal behaviour can shed useful information on if and how teacher interpersonal behaviour in CBE differs from non-CBE learning environments, and whether or not this relates to the expected CBE outcomes of improved learning and motivation.

2.2. Teacher interpersonal behaviour

Teachers use various communication strategies while teaching

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