



# Developing beliefs about classroom motivation: Journeys of preservice teachers

Caroline F. Mansfield\*, Simone E. Volet

School of Education, Murdoch University, Murdoch, Western Australia 6150, Australia

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 30 November 2009

Received in revised form

16 March 2010

Accepted 28 April 2010

### Keywords:

Preservice teachers

Beliefs

Teacher education

Classroom motivation

Teacher beliefs

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the developing beliefs about classroom motivation of eight preservice teachers during teacher education. The framework conceptualises the contexts in which preservice teachers participate and the filtering effect of prior beliefs. Qualitative analyses of multiple data sources reveal two distinct trajectories in the development of beliefs about classroom motivation. The findings highlight the importance of filtering prior beliefs, alignment and conflict of ideas, significance of self-motivating factors and power of emotions in developing beliefs about classroom motivation. Implications emphasize the importance of enabling preservice teachers examining existing beliefs and integrating these with learning during teacher education.

© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Enhancing and maintaining student motivation is an issue of common concern among preservice teachers. While some feel confident in their knowledge about motivation in classrooms, based on their own experience as students and other life experiences, others who have shared classrooms with unmotivated students or who have been unmotivated at school themselves, are highly concerned about how they will approach student motivation when teaching in classrooms. Furthermore, preservice teachers are aware that poor student motivation has implications for engagement and achievement, and may lead to behaviour management issues, which are also challenging for beginning teachers. Given the importance of understanding classroom motivation for preservice teachers, and the obvious benefits of being able to enhance and maintain student motivation, there is value in understanding how preservice teachers learn specifically about classroom motivation. The issue of how teachers learn has emerged as an important research topic in recent years (Beijaard, Korthagen, & Verloop, 2007; Meirink, Meijer, Verloop, & Bergen, 2009a, 2009b; Parise & Spillane, 2010), yet little research has sought to develop understandings about how preservice teachers learn, and acquire beliefs, about classroom motivation. The unique contribution of this study is the development of a framework to understand how student teachers develop understandings about classroom motivation and exploration of the

learning process through the journeys of eight preservice teachers. Understanding the learning journeys of preservice teachers, and how beliefs about classroom motivation emerge and are developed, has important implications both for initial teacher education and teacher professional development.

### 1.1. Teacher beliefs

There is a wealth of research concerning teacher beliefs (see for example, Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Rath & McAninch, 2003). Teacher beliefs have been defined as “suppositions or commitments and are based on evaluation and judgement” (Meirink, Meijer, Verloop, & Bergen, 2009b, p. 90) and as “tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught” (Kagan, 1992, p. 65). Beliefs (or lay theories) about teaching and learning, will guide teacher decisions made about the teaching–learning process, along with selection of specific content (Smith, 2005).

There is also a growing body of research concerning preservice teacher beliefs (Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Richardson, 2003). In light of their extensive experience as learners, it is reasonable to expect that preservice teachers enter teacher education already possessing ‘personal history based beliefs’ (Salisbury-Glennon & Stevens, 1999) about teaching and learning (Anderson et al., 1995; Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Kagan, 1992; Smith, 2005). These beliefs are formed through students’ own educational experiences (formal and informal) and life experiences, such as previous careers or parenting. Studies of preservice teacher beliefs have shown that some students hold deeply ‘entrenched beliefs’

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +61 08 9360 2467; fax: +61 08 9360 6280.

E-mail addresses: [caroline.mansfield@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:caroline.mansfield@murdoch.edu.au) (C.F. Mansfield), [s.volet@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:s.volet@murdoch.edu.au) (S.E. Volet).

(Ashton & Gregoire-Gill, 2003; Chinn & Brewer, 1993) while others hold 'vague' and 'fragmented' beliefs (Winitzky & Kauchak, 1997).

Beliefs shape how preservice teachers interpret and respond to knowledge and experiences during teacher training (Chong & Low, 2009) and can act as 'filters' through which they interpret and view others' teaching (Kagan, 1992). In addition, the process of learning about teaching involves 'filtering' new knowledge through existing beliefs systems before transforming it and making it part of their own approach (Bullough, 1991; Kagan, 1992). Furthermore, Kagan (1992) states that "personal beliefs function as the filter and foundation of new knowledge" (p. 75). Thus, preservice teachers perceive their learning about teaching "through the lens of their prior knowledge, including their preconceptions and beliefs" (Eilam & Poyas, 2009, p. 88). The filtering role of prior knowledge and beliefs therefore, has a potentially critical impact on preservice teachers' learning during formal teacher education.

Pajares' contention, many years ago, that "research on the beliefs of preservice teachers is scarce" (Pajares, 1992, p. 328) and more research was needed on the nature and impact of beliefs on preservice teachers, is still relevant. Interest in teacher beliefs about student learning and motivation and the influence these have on classroom instruction (Turner, Christensen, & Meyer, 2009) is recent. Preservice teacher motivation (Nolen, Ward, Horn, Campbell, & Mahna, 2007) has also received recent attention with researchers interested in 'motivational filters' (Nolen et al., 2009) that influence students' rejection or selection of ideas promoted during their teacher education. Even so, there is little research that specifically investigates preservice teachers' beliefs about classroom motivation and how such beliefs develop. This study, therefore, is timely as it investigates how preservice teachers learn about motivation and the role played by initial understandings and beliefs.

### 1.2. *The role of prior knowledge*

As university educators we have developed a growing awareness that preservice teachers' preconceived notions about classroom motivation can have a significant influence on university learning, classroom practice and teaching success. Many preservice teachers enter teacher education with extrinsic, reinforcement based beliefs about classroom motivation which are often resistant to change and may be reinforced during field placements where students may be exposed to a range of reward systems. While there is significant argument that prior knowledge is important in learning to teach, and that teachers use new information to confirm and strengthen existing beliefs (Tillema, 1998), prior knowledge can affect learning in two ways. It may help facilitate learning by "providing a basis for understanding and judging the validity of solutions to problems" (Pintrich, Marx, & Boyle, 1993, p. 191) or impede learning when providing divergent views from those being espoused. Personal beliefs can act as 'anchors' and facilitate learning that is congruent with existing knowledge, or beliefs may be 'brittle' and impede learning when they are inconsistent with knowledge to be learned (Kagan, 1992, p. 75). One aspect of the present study investigates the origin and role of beliefs of classroom motivation in the motivation learning journeys of preservice teachers and the extent to which they create 'filters' (Kagan, 1992, p. 77; Nolen et al., 2009) that facilitate or limit learning during teacher education.

### 1.3. *Development of beliefs*

Some literature reports preservice teachers hold fixed conceptions, beliefs and perceptions about teaching (Mahlios & Maxson, 1995; McDiarmid, 1990) and that these prior and beliefs play a powerful role in development of teacher identity. Other research

demonstrates that preservice teacher beliefs are significantly influenced by mentors during classroom experiences. Kagan (1992, p. 75) for example, cites research showing preservice teachers are influenced more by mentor teachers than by university courses or supervisors. Winitzky and Kauchak (1997) argue that vague or fragmented beliefs can be developed into a coherent belief system, whereas well organised belief systems are resistant to change and may benefit from instructional approaches that directly challenge beliefs. Despite the potential for development and change in beliefs, and influences from teachers and mentors, research illustrates that targeting preservice teacher beliefs during instruction can influence their beliefs about teaching and learning (Joram & Gabriele, 1998) and that preservice teachers' initial beliefs do change when challenged and explored through appropriate curriculum (Tillema, 1998).

Recent research investigating the role of emotion in teaching suggests that emotion may play a critical role in changing teachers' beliefs (Ashton & Gregoire-Gill, 2003; Zembylas, 2002). Ashton and Gregoire-Gill's (2003) argument that 'emotional arousal' initiates change and that preservice teachers' "emotional reactions to current approaches to belief change" (p. 117) need further investigation. Research into how emotions influence cognitions, motivation and behaviours is extensive (see Sutton & Wheatley, 2003 for a review). The issue of emotion in teacher education is emerging as an area of significant research interest (Demetriou, Wilson, & Winterbottom, 2009; Hastings, 2004, 2009) and understanding more about how emotions can support preservice teachers' learning during teacher education will have implications for teacher education programmes. This study specifically examines the development of preservice teachers' beliefs about classroom motivation and the possible factors (including emotion) that influence this development.

### 1.4. *The importance of anticipated future*

The importance of an individuals' anticipated vision of themselves as a teacher in teacher development has been recently acknowledged in the literature. Olsen (2008, p. 24) describes how teachers' "embedded understandings of and for themselves as teachers" (p. 24) influence their own early development. In addition, preservice teachers often hold strong images of themselves as teachers in the future (Mahlios & Maxson, 1995) and these projected "teacher selves" (Horn, Nolen, Ward, & Campbell, 2008, p. 63) influence their development. Consequently, preservice teachers' learning is influenced by both past experiences and beliefs, and visions for the future. Even so, the literature concerning preservice teachers' future vision in the 'real world' of teaching, and how this vision develops, is minimal. To contribute to the emerging understandings in the literature, this study includes preservice teachers' visions of themselves in the anticipated real world and explores factors that influence the development of such visions.

### 1.5. *Multiple contexts*

While prior beliefs may act as filters for learning during teacher education, to be successful preservice teachers need to also effectively manage and negotiate the demands and constraints of "multiple interrelated contexts" (Smith, 2005, p. 6), that influence understanding of academic content, teaching and learning. Typically teacher education students experience two main learning contexts, namely, university and classroom practice. These contexts, or 'worlds' (Davidson & Phelan, 1999; Horn et al., 2008) which students are an integral part of and co-contribute to shaping, may have differing demands and may promote complementary or divergent views about learning and motivation. In addition, these

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/374455>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/374455>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)