



## Longitudinal relations between teaching-related motivations and student-reported teaching quality



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### HIGHLIGHTS

- Teacher motivation and teaching quality were stable to a large extent.
- Controlling for stable inter-individual differences, no longitudinal effects occurred.
- Trait aspects of enthusiasm and teaching quality were highly related.
- Trait aspects of self-efficacy and teaching quality were weakly related.

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### ABSTRACT

Teaching-related motivations are often assumed to influence teaching quality; however, the empirical evidence regarding the directionality of such influences is scarce. The present study thus examined the reciprocal links between teaching-related motivations (self-efficacy and enthusiasm for teaching) and student-reported teaching quality (classroom management, learning support, and cognitive activation). Two-level cross-lagged panel analyses across three time points (with an initial sample of 165 secondary-level mathematics teachers and their 4273 students) revealed no significant cross-lagged effects when teachers' stable inter-individual differences are taken into account. Our findings suggest that teachers' motivations are remarkably stable over time.

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### 1. Introduction

Teaching-related motivations constitute a core element of teachers' professional competence, and are assumed to influence such important outcomes as teachers' instructional practices and teaching quality (e.g., Kunter et al., 2013; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Available research generally supports positive associations between aspects of teacher motivation and teaching characteristics such as autonomy support or monitoring (e.g., Hein et al., 2012;

Kunter et al., 2008; Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006; Pelletier, Séguin-Lévesque, & Legault, 2002; Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007). However, the vast majority of this research is cross-sectional and thus potential longitudinal reciprocal links between teaching-related motivations and teaching quality remain relatively unexplored (see also Soodak & Podell, 1998). This constitutes an important gap in the literature, because argumentation for the high relevance of teacher motivation regularly refers to its longitudinal effects on teaching quality, and cross-sectional relations are not sufficient to support the existence of such effects. Instead, there could be no longitudinal relation between these aspects at all (e.g., because both depend on a third variable), there might be reciprocal links, or longitudinal influences might in fact be in the opposite direction than previously assumed (Kunter & Holzberger, 2014).

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Indeed, recent evidence suggests that teacher motivation is not only a predictor of teaching quality (as is typically assumed in the extant literature), but is also influenced by teachers' prior classroom experiences and quality of teaching. Specifically, [Holzberger, Philipp, and Kunter \(2013\)](#) demonstrated that two dimensions of student-perceived teaching quality (cognitive activation and learning support) had a positive longitudinal predictive effect on teachers' self-efficacy whereas no significant predictive effects of teachers' self-efficacy on student-perceived teaching quality were found.

Disentangling potential reciprocal links between teacher motivation and teaching quality is important for several reasons. For instance, gaining a more advanced understanding of the longitudinal relations between aspects of teacher motivation and teaching quality has implications for teacher training and professional development; if teacher motivation has a considerable effect on teaching quality, it might be useful to not only aim at enhancing teaching quality directly, but also indirectly through changing teachers' motivations (for a similar argument regarding students, see [Wigfield & Eccles, 2000](#)). Analogously, if teacher motivation is primarily a consequence of their classroom experiences (e.g., mastery experiences with high quality teaching), then this might be a key pathway towards improving teachers' professional wellbeing. Finally, if these two types of constructs do not significantly predict each other over time, but are nevertheless correlated within each time point, research attention should be devoted to third variables that might shape both teachers' motivations and instructional quality (e.g., professional knowledge, prior training, and teaching beliefs). In the following sections, we discuss the role of teaching-related motivations in the instructional process, conceptualizations of teaching quality, and possible longitudinal relations between teachers' motivations and teaching quality.

### 1.1. *Aspects of teacher motivation: definition and relevance*

The term motivation generally refers to the underlying reasons behind people's actions ([Graham & Weiner, 1996](#)). Because these reasons can be very diverse, motivation is an umbrella term for a variety of internal characteristics and processes. Several theories have been developed that differentiate types of motivations. One of the most prominent frameworks is expectancy-value theory ([Eccles, 2009](#)). It proposes that achievement-related behaviors can be predicted by individuals' beliefs about whether they can carry out relevant actions successfully (expectancy component) as well as the value they attach to these actions and expected results (value component). Teachers' self-efficacy (i.e., the belief in one's own capabilities) and teachers' enthusiasm for teaching (i.e., intrinsic value seen in teaching) can be seen as pivotal representations of these two basic motivational constructs; self-efficacy is closely related to the expectancy component of motivation, enthusiasm to the value component. Relating self-efficacy and enthusiasm to the logic of the expectancy-value framework of motivation indicates that core aspects of teacher motivation can be captured by investigating self-efficacy and enthusiasm, because each of them represents a central aspect of human motivation. Due to their critical role for teachers and teaching ([Kunter, 2011](#)), these two constructs have attracted substantial attention in research on teacher motivation. For instance, both self-efficacy and enthusiasm for teaching have been linked to such important teacher outcomes as burnout (e.g., [Kunter, Frenzel, Nagy, Baumert, & Pekrun, 2011](#); [Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007](#)) and job satisfaction (e.g., [Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Steca, 2003](#); [Kunter et al., 2011](#); [Vieluf, Kunter, & van de Vijver, 2013](#)). Teachers' self-efficacy in particular has been identified as by far the most frequently studied aspect of teacher motivation ([Woolfolk Hoy, 2008](#)).

Teachers' self-efficacy reflects a belief in teachers' own capabilities to influence student learning and to manage the learning environment ([Klassen & Chiu, 2010](#); [Dicke, Parker, Holzberger, Kunter, & Leutner, 2015](#); [Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001](#)). Self-efficacy constitutes a motivational construct, because individuals would be unlikely to engage in activities or to pursue goals that they believe might exceed their capabilities; conversely, efficacious individuals are more likely than less efficacious ones to set challenging goals, to persist in the face of difficulty, and to show resilience in the face of failure ([Bandura, 1997](#)). Drawing on [Bandura's \(1997\)](#) socio-cognitive theory, [Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy \(1998\)](#) proposed that teachers' self-efficacy develops cyclically. Efficacy-building experiences (e.g., mastery experiences such as producing or failing to produce desired classroom outcomes) affect teachers' perceived teaching competence and thus their sense of self-efficacy. Teachers' self-efficacy, in turn, influences subsequent levels of performance, mediated via teachers' goals, effort, and persistence. Teachers' performance provides efficacy-relevant information, therefore starting a new cycle of self-efficacy-building experiences and judgments.

Teachers' enthusiasm refers to an affective, inner-personal state that can be categorized as both a positive emotion and an intrinsic type of motivation ([Kunter et al., 2011](#)).<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, teacher enthusiasm is investigated in research on both teachers' emotions (see e.g., [Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun, & Sutton, 2009](#), labeled as teacher enjoyment) and motivation (see e.g., [Kunter et al., 2011](#)). Two components of teacher enthusiasm have emerged in motivation research: enthusiasm for the subject matter taught by the teacher, and enthusiasm for teaching. Only the latter has been found to be positively linked to students' perceptions of teaching quality ([Kunter et al., 2008](#)). In a comprehensive review of the literature, [Kunter and Holzberger \(2014\)](#) proposed that teacher enthusiasm represents an intrinsic orientation towards teaching that is influenced by school characteristics (e.g., school climate), teacher characteristics (e.g., self-efficacy), and student characteristics (e.g., achievement), and influences teacher characteristics (e.g., well-being), teaching quality (e.g., autonomy support for students), and student outcomes (e.g., achievement).

A common assumption in research on both teachers' self-efficacy and enthusiasm for teaching is that such motivational factors matter due to their effects on teachers' behaviors, which, in turn, can influence students' motivation and achievement (e.g., [Klassen & Tze, 2014](#); [Kunter et al., 2013](#); [Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001](#); [Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998](#); [Ware & Kit-santas, 2007](#)). One of the most important proximal outcomes of teacher motivation within this functional chain is teachers' instructional practices and their teaching quality. The main objective of the present study was therefore to examine the longitudinal relations between crucial teaching-related motivations (teachers' self-efficacy and enthusiasm for teaching) and dimensions of teaching quality.

### 1.2. *Teaching quality: conceptualization and measurement*

Teaching quality is one of the key factors influencing student learning over and above the effects of student characteristics (see review in [Hattie, 2009](#)). In the context of teacher effectiveness research (see review in [Seidel & Shavelson, 2007](#)) teaching quality

<sup>1</sup> Enthusiasm is in some contexts also conceptualized as a teaching style (see e.g., [Patrick, Turner, Meyer, & Midgley, 2003](#)). In the present study, we use [Kunter et al.'s \(2011\)](#) conceptualization, according to which enthusiasm reflects a subjective experience and has motivational implications.

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