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Special Issue Editorial

Teacher motivation

In the past three decades, countless empirical studies investigating student learning motivation have been conducted, applying different theoretical approaches and examining various student populations. In comparison, the causes and effects of teacher motivation received much less attention in educational and psychological research.

Teacher motivation is said to be an important facet of learning environments and assumed to influence students' learning processes as well as teachers' support of educational reform. It is also a crucial element of teachers' job satisfaction and well-being (de Jesus & Lens, 2005). There are few studies which investigate these assumed positive effects of teacher motivation; particularly few are addressing the effects of teacher motivation on students' learning and classroom instruction. Furthermore, existing research results are only partially consistent and sometimes even contradictory.

Although the research on teacher motivation is still in its early stages, some promising research lines are already evident (for a summary see Kunter, 2010).

Apart from research on occupational choice, which addresses orientations, motivation or interests (see Rothland, 2010), most of the studies focus on personal aspects of a teacher's motivation. They utilize, for instance, the theoretical conceptions of *social-cognitive theories*, such as self-efficacy expectations (e.g. Schmitz & Schwarzer, 2002) and locus of control (Fernet, Senécal, Guay, Marsh, & Dowson, 2008). For example, one study finds correlations between self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Schmitz & Schwarzer, 2002).

Other studies use *personal characteristics* such as extraversion and neuroticism and relate them to satisfaction, workload and other aspects related to motivation (Mayr, 2010).

In the past few years, further studies on teacher motivation which were based on *cognitive action theories* have been presented, particularly focusing on goal-orientation (Butler, 2007; Dickhäuser, Butler, & Tönjes, 2007; Kaplan & Mahr, 2007).

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For example, Butler (2007) analyzed the associations between goal orientations and the help-seeking behavior of teachers, Malmberg (2006) studied the relation between goal orientation and intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation as well as performance.

A small number of studies on teacher motivation take emotional and content related aspects of motivation into account. For example, Mayr (1998) found connections between personal characteristics, teaching skills and the experience quality of teachers' flow as well as interest in activities of the teaching profession. Bakker (2005) found direct associations between intrinsic motivation of teachers and the flow experience of their students.

In recent years, a number of studies applied self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2002) to the study of teacher motivation. Among others, these studies analyze teachers' autonomy orientations and teachers' support of the autonomy of their students as well as direct and indirect connections between student motivation and teacher motivation (Pelletier, Séguin-Lévesque, & Legault, 2002; Reeve, 2006; Roth, Assor, Kanat-Mayom, & Kaplan, 2007; Taylor, Ntoumanis, & Standage, 2008).

To conclude, there is some evidence that teacher motivation can be seen as an important factor for an effective educational system. But there is still a lack of empirical studies on teacher motivation, particularly concerning the following aspects:

- *Environmental conditions*, such as working conditions at school, students' behavior and students' habits or aspects of the entire school system and their effects on teacher motivation are rarely systematically analyzed. This also includes the effect of personal preconditions and biographical aspects.
- The *impact of teacher motivation* on learning environments in classrooms, and students' learning processes, should be studied more intensively. This requires data both from the students' and the teachers' perspectives.
- Data from *longitudinal studies* are indispensable for the assessment of the opportunities and limitations of the development of teacher motivation.
- *Different professional activities* of teachers might show a differential impact on teacher motivation. Such activities include teaching children of a particular age group, cooperation in teams, taking part in in-service education and school development activities or implementing innovations in classroom teaching.

This special issue of the Journal for Educational Research Online addresses some of these issues. It reduces the lack of empirical data and encourages a broader discussion on the topic of teacher motivation.

This issue also demonstrates the breadth of approaches to study teacher motivation. The authors use four different motivational theories in their empirical studies: goal orientation theory, person-object-theory of interest, self-determination theory, and Personality-Systems-Interaction Theory.

Michaela S. Fasching, Markus Dresel, Oliver Dickhäuser and Sebastian Nitsche address the development of teacher trainees' goal orientation during two years pre-

service training in Germany (the *Referendariat*). As theoretical framework, they use the goal orientation framework which has been adapted for the teaching profession (Butler, 2007; Dickhäuser, et al., 2007). In a longitudinal design, the research group analyzes typical profiles and changes in teacher trainees' goal orientations using hierarchical linear modeling. Clusters of the progression of goal orientation serve as predictors of outcomes such as achievement, stress experiences, attitudes concerning help seeking and the tendency for dropping out from the teaching profession.

Judith Schellenbach-Zell and *Cornelia Gräsel* study teacher motivation as well as its supporting and inhibiting conditions in the context of two large-scale school innovation projects in Germany, "Chemistry in Context" (*Chemie im Kontext*) and "Transfer 21". Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2002) and person-object-theory of interest (Krapp, 2007) provide the theoretical background for this study. The authors analyze in what way certain incentives are predictors for teacher motivation. Using regression analysis, the authors examine whether the perception of needs satisfaction and several incentives predict autonomous and controlled motivational styles.

Finally, *Barbara Hanfstingl*, *Irina Andreitz*, *Florian H. Müller*, and *Almut Thomas* apply the assumptions of self-determination theory to investigate teacher motivation. The emphasis of their paper is the analysis of personal and environmental predictors for teachers' intrinsic motivation for teaching. Relatively stable personality dispositions have seldom been the focus of research on teacher motivation. Following self-determination theory and Kuhl's Personality-Systems-Interaction Theory (PSI Theory; Kuhl, 2001; Kuhl & Fuhrmann, 2008), it is proposed that the perceived support of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and social relatedness), as well as the personality aspects of self-regulation (self maintenance) and self-control (goal maintenance) are related to intrinsic teacher motivation. By using structural equation modeling it is tested whether self-regulation and self-control are significant moderators between needs support at the workplace and intrinsic teacher motivation.

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