



## Impact of Teachers' Beliefs on Teaching Practices

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### ABSTRACT

Approaches is embedded within ongoing reform efforts in education. The former style emphasizes the easy transmission of known concepts to pupils from authoritative sources, whereas the latter emphasizes the critical importance of students actively creating their own knowledge. It is worth mentioning that instructor personal convictions have the capacity to impact how these reform initiatives are carried out. On the other hand, reform efforts' actual execution might have a significant impact on teachers' core beliefs. Teachers' pedagogical beliefs influence their decision and action before, during and after class. Classroom action are a result of decision-making processes where in teacher judge how they teach effetely. In trying to understand the nature of relationship between beliefs and practices, educator have engaged in extensive debate over teachers' beliefs and practice. Despite the ongoing debates, beliefs are still not clearly defined and has frequently been used in place of knowledge. In order to comprehend the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, in this paper, I explore the nature of teachers' beliefs. Then, I discussed how teachers' beliefs have been formed. Also, I will discuss the relationship between teachers' beliefs and knowledge. I will also argue that the impact of beliefs on teachers' practices. Then, I present correlation between teachers' beliefs', knowledge and practices.

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### INTRODUCTION

Beliefs have been regarded as the most valuable psychological construct in the realm of teacher education, they also pose one of the most challenging definitional hurdles due to their resistance to empirical investigations (Pajares, 1992, p. 308). In his comprehensive review of research on this subject,

Pajares characterizes beliefs as a "complex construct," one that has not consistently received precise delineation and goes by various names, such as attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, and repertoires of understanding, among others, all of which are found in the literature (p. 309). Loucks-Horsley et al. (1998) assert that "beliefs transcend mere opinions; they may fall short of absolute truth, but we remain committed to them" (p. 27). Pajares (1992) also acknowledges that the challenge in studying teachers' beliefs arises from issues related to definition, poor conceptualisation and differing understanding of beliefs structure.

### **THE NATURE OF TEACHERS' BELIEFS**

The term beliefs have been interpreted in various ways within the literature, sometimes used interchangeably with terms like attitudes, values, judgments, opinions, ideology, perception, conceptions, conceptual systems, dispositions, implicit theories, rules of practice and perspectives (Pajares 1992). However, this has led to confusion in distinguishing beliefs from knowledge.

Abelson (1979) defines beliefs as the manipulation of knowledge for specific purposes or under particular circumstances. Brown and Cooney (1982) characterize beliefs as disposition to action acting as significant determinants of behaviour.

Rokeach (1972) defined beliefs as any simple propositions, either conscious or unconscious, inferred from a person's statements or actions. Rokeach identifies three types of beliefs: descriptive or existential beliefs, evaluative beliefs involve categorizing objects as true / false or correct / incorrect (example I believe this ice cream is good) prescriptive beliefs advocate action or situations as desirable/ undesirable (example I believe children should obey their parents).

Rokeach (1972) proposes that all beliefs encompass three elements: a cognitive component representing knowledge about truth / false or disability/ undesirability, an affective component evoking varying emotional responses related to the beliefs object and behavioural component Prompting action upon Activation.

Rokeach likens the organization of beliefs to an atom's structure with certain beliefs being more central (core beliefs) interconnected (peripheral beliefs) and resistance to change.

Ackermann (1972) distinguishes beliefs into four categories: behavioural beliefs, unconscious beliefs, conscious beliefs and rational beliefs. Behavioural beliefs stem from fixed behavioural patterns associated with a belief. Unconscious beliefs in contrast are long standing belief that influence behaviour but remain unrecognized by individual conscious beliefs are explicitly formulated beliefs the individual is aware of rational beliefs represent an Idealized form of actual belief structures

Pajares (1992) defines as an individual's judgment of the truth of false sting of a proportion inferred from a collective understanding of human communication and actions (p 316). In the educational context Honey et al (2003) defines beliefs as convictions, philosophy, or opinion about teaching and learning(P367).

### **SET OF FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS THAT CHARACTERIZED BELIEFS**

- Beliefs are not isolated entities but instead form a structured network within the mind, creating an "internal architecture" of interconnected systems. While this organization might not always adhere to strict logical patterns, it reflects psychological associations.
- The significance of beliefs is not uniform across the individual's cognitive landscape. They are ranked based on their interconnections with other beliefs and emotional constructs, guiding their relative importance.
- Beliefs exhibit a spectrum of centrality, wherein some hold a more central, core, or foundational role compared to others. Consequently, beliefs of higher centrality tend to be more resistant to undergoing change.
- Modifying a belief's perspective reverberates throughout the entire belief system due to the interwoven nature of beliefs, potentially impacting their coherence and interactions.
- Beliefs wield a more profound influence than mere knowledge in shaping how individuals perceive, structure, and approach tasks and challenges, making them potent predictors of behaviour.

### **CLARIFYING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN BELIEF AND KNOWLEDGE**

Pajares argues that knowledge is rooted in objective facts, while beliefs stem from evaluation and judgment.

Kagan (1992) contending that a substantial portion of a teacher's professional knowledge can be characterized as belief. Kagan asserts that knowledge becomes a belief when it attains affirmation through objective evidence or consensus.

Kagan elaborates a teacher's knowledge, asserting that it is situated within three crucial dimensions: context, content, and person.

Nespor (1987) contributes to this discourse by positing that although teachers might share similar scientific knowledge, their teaching methodologies differ significantly due to the potent influence of their beliefs.

**Table 1:** The differences between beliefs and knowledge

<b>Beliefs</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>
Refer to suppositions, commitments, and ideologies	Refers to factual propositions and the understandings that inform skilful action
Do not require a truth condition	Must satisfy “truth condition”
Based on evaluation judgment	Based on objective fact
Cannot be evaluated	Can be evaluated or judged
Episodically-stored material influenced by personal experiences or cultural and institutional sources	Stored in semantic networks
Static	Often changes
Beliefs direct the acquisition of knowledge	While knowledge exerts an impact on beliefs.

## **IMPACT OF TEACHERS' BELIEFS ON TEACHING PRACTICES**

Teachers' beliefs play a crucial role in shaping their instructional decisions and classroom practices. These deeply held convictions, formed through personal experiences, education, and professional development, significantly influence the teaching and learning environment. The impact of teachers' beliefs on teaching practices is evident in several ways:

- 1. Instructional Approach:** Teachers' beliefs about how students learn best shape their instructional strategies. Beliefs in student-centred approaches may lead to activities that promote exploration, critical thinking, and collaboration, while teacher-centred beliefs may result in more structured and directive instruction.
- 2. Curriculum Design:** Teachers' decisions about resources, lesson plans, and assessment creation are influenced by their beliefs regarding the objectives and substance of the curriculum. The subjects and skills offered in the curriculum are directly influenced by what teachers think are essential for pupils to learn.
- 3. Assessment Strategies:** Teachers' assessments of students' understanding and progress are influenced by their assessment beliefs. The types of tests utilized and the comments given to students are influenced by teachers' attitudes about the aim of assessments, whether to measure understanding or to promote progress.
- 4. Classroom Environment:** Teachers' beliefs about classroom management and discipline influence the tone and atmosphere of the learning environment. Rules, procedures, and expectations in the classroom are influenced by teacher beliefs about student behaviour, teacher power, and student autonomy.
- 5. Interaction with Students:** Teachers' beliefs about students' capabilities, potential, and interests impact their interactions. Positive beliefs can foster a supportive and empowering teacher-student relationship, while negative beliefs might hinder student engagement and self-esteem.
- 6. Differentiation and Personalization:** Beliefs Teachers' ability to modify education to meet the requirements of all students is influenced by their beliefs regarding individual differences and different learning styles. Teachers who value differentiation may create varied learning opportunities, that suit a range of abilities and preferences.

7. **Teacher Roles:** Beliefs about the teacher's role as a facilitator, mentor, guide, or authority figure influence how teachers interact with students. These beliefs shape how much control teachers give to students in the learning process.

8. **Adaptation to Change:** Teachers' beliefs can affect their willingness to adopt new teaching methods, technologies, or curricular changes. Strongly held beliefs may act as barriers to change, while more flexible beliefs may encourage a willingness to experiment with new approaches.

9. **Teacher Professional Development:** Beliefs influence the extent to which teachers engage in professional development activities. Teachers who value continuous growth and learning are more likely to seek out opportunities for skill development and knowledge enhancement.

10. **Impact on Student Learning:** Ultimately, the alignment between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices affects student learning outcomes. When instructional practices are congruent with beliefs, students are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and successful in their learning.

11. **Consistency and Coherence:** When teachers' beliefs are closely aligned with their teaching practices, there is a sense of coherence in the classroom. This alignment can create a positive and effective learning environment that caters to students.

12. **Reflection and Growth:** Awareness of the influence of beliefs on teaching practices encourages reflective practice. Teachers who critically assess their beliefs in relation to student outcomes are more likely to refine their practices and seek professional development opportunities.

## **CORRELATION BETWEEN TEACHERS' BELIEFS, KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES**

The relationship between teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practices is playing a pivotal role in shaping the educational experience. Understanding this correlation provides insights into how educators design instruction, interact with students, and contribute to student learning outcomes.

**1. Beliefs and Knowledge Influence Practices:** Teachers' beliefs are interlinked with their pedagogical decisions. Beliefs about effective teaching methods, student learning, and classroom management guide instructional practices. These beliefs are informed by a combination of formal knowledge (education, subject matter expertise) and personal experiences, which shape the ways teachers approach their classrooms.

- 2. Knowledge Informs Beliefs:** Teachers' knowledge base, comprising subject matter expertise, educational theories, and teaching strategies, impacts their beliefs. Informed teachers are more likely to hold beliefs aligned with current research and best practices.
- 3. Reflective Practice:** The interplay between beliefs, knowledge, and practices is enhanced through reflective practice. Teachers who critically examine their beliefs in light of their classroom experiences and professional learning are better equipped to refine their practices.
- 4. Alignment or Discrepancy:** Educators' practices may align closely with their beliefs and knowledge, resulting in a coherent instructional approach. Conversely, discrepancies can arise when teachers' practices deviate from their beliefs or when beliefs are not informed by accurate knowledge. Such misalignments can lead to frustration, inconsistency, or ineffective teaching.
- 5. Professional Development:** Engaging in professional development activities helps teachers bridge the gap between their beliefs, knowledge, and practices.
- 6. Impact on Student Learning:** The correlation between teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practices significantly impacts student learning outcomes. Effective alignment enhances engagement, comprehension, and skill development. Inconsistent alignment can hinder student progress and negatively affect the learning environment.
- 7. Contextual Factors:** External factors such as school culture, student demographics, and curriculum requirements can influence the relationship between beliefs, knowledge, and practices.
- 8. Continuous Evolution:** The relationship between these factors is not static. Teachers' beliefs may evolve as they gain new knowledge and experience. Likewise, instructional practices can change as educators reevaluate their beliefs in light of student responses and academic results.
- 9. Personal Pedagogy:** The interplay between beliefs, knowledge, and practices provides to a teacher's unique pedagogical style. This personal approach defines how teachers engage with students, structure lessons, and foster learning experiences.
- 10. Shared Understanding:** Educational institutions benefit from fostering a shared understanding of the relationship between beliefs, knowledge, and practices.

In essence, the correlation between teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practices underscores the complexity of teaching. Effective educators continually assess this relationship, seeking to align their beliefs with research-based knowledge and translate these insights into impactful classroom practices that facilitate meaningful student learning.

## CONCLUSION

The concept of beliefs, as illuminated through diverse interpretations and scholarly perspectives, provides a lens through which we can explore the intricate landscape of human cognition and its impact on education. Beliefs carve out a unique space in shaping individual actions, thoughts, and interactions. Amidst the diversity of interpretations, it becomes crucial to untangle the complex relationship between beliefs and knowledge, shedding light on their distinct roles and implications. Teachers' beliefs have a profound influence on their teaching practices, directly impacting classroom dynamics, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Recognizing the interconnectedness of these elements helps educators navigate their roles with greater intention and effectiveness.

The alignment of beliefs, knowledge and practices elements results in effective teaching practices, enhanced student engagement, and improved learning outcomes. Recognizing the correlation between beliefs and pedagogical decisions empowers educators to cultivate a learning environment that reflects both their values and the best practices in education. The nature of beliefs is far from static; it is a dynamic force that shapes human behaviour, guides educational practices, and influences the learning journey. As we navigate the intricate relationship between beliefs, knowledge, and practices, we unlock the potential to create meaningful educational experiences that empower learners, enrich pedagogical strategies, and contribute to the holistic development of individuals within the educational ecosystem.

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