

Shifts in Teacher Motivation over the First Year of Teacher Education

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Objectives

Over the past years, the interest on *teacher motivation* has quickly grown (Richardson, Karabenick, & Watt, 2014). Indeed, a better understanding of the reasons at the basis of teachers' career choice (i.e., *motivation to become a teacher*) and their consequences in terms of commitment and satisfaction would allow researchers to propose solutions to tame the issue of teacher shortage, which has become a concern in many countries. Moreover, teaching is recognized as a complex, multifaceted and difficult occupation that requires deep engagement and perseverance. Accordingly, *motivation to become a teacher* plays a significant role in teachers' behavior in the classroom, particularly their teaching style, which in turn impacts student learning, motivation, and achievement, as accumulating evidence indicates (Butler & Shibaz, 2008; Kunter, Tsai, Klusmann, Brunner, Krauss, & Baumert, 2008; Pelletier, Séguin-Lévesque, & Legault, 2002).

Motivation to become a teacher is not the only aspect to be considered: After having chosen the teaching career, one has to develop another type of motivation, which is related to the diverse tasks a teacher has to fulfill (e.g., manage the classroom, plan the instruction). Indeed, depending on the task, motivation can substantially differ. Eccles' (1983) expectancy-value theory (EVT) of achievement motivation can be readily applied to describe *task-related motivation*. The extent to which teachers engage in these tasks are a function of self-efficacy beliefs (representative of expectancy) – the perception of one's abilities to successfully achieve teaching tasks, as well as perceptions of the costs – the undesirable facets of engaging in the task such as time and effort needed and the lost opportunities resulting from this engagement, and values – the perceived interest, utility, and attainment.

Teacher education would be predicted to impact *task-related motivation* to the extent that teachers learn knowledge and teaching skills that should help them increase their self-efficacy and value, and reduce the perceived cost of teaching tasks (Bobbitt Nolen, Ward, & Horn, 2014; Klassen, Durksen, & Tze, 2014; Woolfolk Hoy & Burke Spero, 2005). The present study extends research on teacher motivation by examining how *task-related motivation* evolves during teacher education and the role of *motivation to become a teacher* in this evolution. Due to their importance in teaching and their major place in teacher education programs, the teaching tasks considered are instructional planning and classroom management. Specifically, the aims of this study were:

- 1) To test whether and how *task-related motivation* (self-efficacy, value and cost) for classroom management and instructional planning change over the first year of teacher education;

- 2) To investigate whether *motivation to become a teacher* (as conceptualized in the FIT-Choice framework; Watt & Richardson, 2007) has an impact on the evolution of *task-related motivation* during teacher education.

Theoretical framework

Most research has investigated teacher motivation at a general level, e.g., reasons for becoming a teacher or the goals pursued by practicing teachers. In consequence, *task-related motivation* and the potential impact of teacher education on teacher motivation are largely unknown. There is scarce empirical evidence showing that, thanks to teacher education, teachers increase their self-efficacy beliefs (Woolfolk Hoy & Burke Spero, 2005), which is followed by a decline during the first year of teaching. Other motivational aspects such as value and cost regarding teaching activities have hardly been considered despite their likely relevance. According to Huberman (1993), classroom management is among the major concerns of beginning teachers, suggesting that it may involve a high cost.

Based on such limited past research, we expected teachers to increase their self-efficacy beliefs and reduce the perceived cost of their tasks. The first assumption is founded on the fact that teachers develop their understanding of classroom management and instructional planning and learn how to practically accomplish these tasks, and as a consequence become more confident (i.e., increase their self-efficacy). Learning how to accomplish the tasks implies that it also becomes less demanding and thus their perceived cost would decrease. Regarding change in task value, we conjecture that teacher education increases understanding of how useful, interesting, and important teaching tasks are. In a study emphasizing the relations between self-efficacy, beliefs about the profession and motivation to become a teacher, Pop and Turner (2009) found that teachers perceiving teaching as demanding and overwhelming also expressed lack of confidence in their teaching skills. On the other hand, teachers perceived teaching as desirable if they had a high level of self-efficacy. On this basis, we conjecture that self-efficacy is a predictor of the perceived cost and value of teaching tasks.

We also assumed that *task-related motivation* was dependent on *motivation to become a teacher*. The study by Huberman (1993) revealed such a connection: Teachers with so-called active motivations (e.g., attributing a high intrinsic value to teaching) were less likely to experience self-doubts and a career crisis than those who had material motives. Indeed, those who became teachers because they felt that they had the abilities to be a good teachers might both value teaching tasks more highly and cost as lower. There is evidence that those who fall back on teaching and do not have any active motivation hold unrealistic expectations about the tasks (they simply reproduce the perceived actions of their former teachers) and underestimate the difficulty of teaching (Weinstein, 1988). Throughout teacher education they realize the difficulty (i.e., the cost) of teaching tasks.

Research based on the “Factors Influencing Teaching Choice” (FIT-Choice) model revealed the consequences of different motivations to choose teaching, notably for occupational commitment (Watt & Richardson, 2008), suggesting that these initial motivations have a pervasive effect on teacher motivation over time. Furthermore, both beneficial motivations (e.g., having chosen teaching because one feels to have good aptitudes

for it) and deleterious or problematic motivations (e.g., choosing teaching as a “fallback career”) were identified.

Method

102 vocational teachers participated in the study. In Switzerland, vocational teachers can legally teach for several years without training certification. Teacher education takes place along with their current teaching job in a vocational school, a few years after they were hired, and includes theoretical courses as well as educators’ visits in the teacher’s classroom. In the teacher education program, vocational teachers are allocated to different classes (with different teacher educators) whether they are teaching theoretical or practical subjects. Moreover, teachers of practical subjects follow a 1-year program, whereas teachers of theoretical subjects follow a 2- or 3-year program. Participants’ mean teaching experience prior to entering education was 5 years. 39 participants were teaching practical subjects, and 63 were teaching theoretical subjects. At the onset of teacher education (T1), and again nine months later (T2), the participants completed a survey including measures (Likert-scale with various anchors) of *motivation to become a teacher* and *task-related motivation* (see Table 1 for sample items and factor determinacies). In addition, two control variables were included: a) prior teaching experience (years of experience in teaching before entering teacher education) and b) type of subject taught (theoretical vs practical).

Motivation to Become a Teacher

An adapted version of the *FIT-Choice scale* (Watt & Richardson, 2007) was used to examine motivations to enter teaching, including the following seven dimensions: *Aptitude* (3 items referring to a choice based on the perception of one’s competence at teaching), *Social utility value* (5 items assessing the extent to which one chose teaching for social reasons such as working with young people, or making a social contribution), *Personal utility value* (5 items assessing the extent to which one chose teaching for quality-of-life issues such as job security or time for family), *Intrinsic value* (3 items assessing the extent to which the career choice was made on the basis of one’s interest in teaching activities), *Fallback career* (5 items referring to a choice by default, or the lack of any other option), *Choice by opportunity* (4 items referring to a possibility that was offered to the teacher), and *Subject interest* (4 items assessing the extent to which the choice to become teacher derives from one’s personal interest for the subject taught).

Task-Related Motivation

Self-efficacy beliefs was assessed by three subscales adapted from the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) and included *self-efficacy for classroom management* (4 items), *self-efficacy for student engagement* (4 items), and *self-efficacy for instructional planning* (4 items; developed by the authors). *Perceived value of teaching tasks* was assessed by 4 items related to interest, attainment, and utility (2 items). *Perceived cost of teaching tasks* was assessed by 4 items including perceived difficulty (time and effort needed; 3 items) in addition to opportunity cost.

Results

Regarding the first research question, the differences in latent means between the two measurement times are reported in Table 1. Teachers evolved towards a higher self-efficacy for instructional planning and for student engagement, but no difference was found in self-efficacy for classroom management. Task value did not significantly change in any of the two teaching tasks. Finally, perceived cost significantly decreased for instructional planning but not for classroom management. In sum, teacher education had an impact on task-related motivation though not for each of the components considered.

Regarding the second research question, Figures 1 and 2 show that teachers who had a high self-efficacy at the beginning of teacher training tended to perceive teaching activities as less demanding in terms of costs at T2. This was valid for instructional planning as well as for classroom management. *Motivation to become a teacher* had a significant effect on *task-related motivation* at T2 both for classroom management and instructional planning. The importance attributed to one's aptitude in becoming a teacher was related to an increase in the value of instructional planning over time, whereas choosing teaching as a fallback career increased the perceived cost of classroom management over time. None of the other types of motivations to become a teacher had a significant effect.

Finally, prior teaching experience was found to be positively related to the three types of self-efficacy and to the perceived value of classroom management at T2, while teaching a theoretical subject was a negative predictor of self-efficacy (instructional planning and student engagement) at T2.

Significance of the Study

The results revealed that teacher *task-related motivation* shifted during teacher education, notably self-efficacy beliefs and perceptions of cost. Value was less impacted. Furthermore, teachers with a high self-efficacy did benefit more from the teacher education program as they reduced their perceptions of the two tasks as representing a cost.

The assumption of an articulation between *motivation to become a teacher* and *task-related motivation* was confirmed by the results: Some motivations affected the shift in *task-related motivation* during teacher education. First, the importance of aptitudes in becoming a teacher favored the valuation of one's abilities: Teachers who believed they had more aptitudes for teaching were more likely to self-confirm their choice by attaching higher value to instructional planning. Second, the effect of choosing teaching as a fallback career on the perceived cost of classroom management might be interpreted as a form of disillusion. This suggests that those who came to teaching as a second-choice career might have realized during teacher education that classroom management required time, effort and had an opportunity cost.

Finally, prior teaching experience was related to self-efficacy and task value, which indicates that it helped teacher develop a positive profile of *task-related motivation*. Teachers of practical subjects were found to increase their self-efficacy beliefs more than those teaching theoretical topics. This might be due to differences in how teachers were trained (same content but different teacher educators) and/or the fact that teachers of practical

subjects reached the end of the program at T2 and considered themselves fully qualified for teaching, whereas the theory teachers only completed part of their program and might feel that they still had much more to learn about teaching. In sum, the study illustrates how teacher education exacerbated, to some extent, the effects of *motivation to become a teacher* on teachers' *task-related motivation*, and that EVT is an appropriate theoretical framework with which to examine the impact of teacher education.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. *Measures and sample items*

Factors	Sample items	Factor determinacies (T1)	Latent mean differences T2-T1
<i>Motivation to become a teacher</i>			
Aptitude	<i>I chose teaching because I have the qualities of a good teacher.</i>	.909	-
Social utility value	<i>I chose teaching because it allows me to work with young people.</i>	.900	-
Personal utility value	<i>I chose teaching because it provides a secure job.</i>	.936	-
Intrinsic Value	<i>I chose teaching because I am interested in teaching.</i>	.942	-
Fallback career	<i>I chose teaching as a last-resort career.</i>	.927	-
Opportunity	<i>I chose teaching because certain circumstances brought me into teaching.</i>	.905	-
Subject interest	<i>I chose teaching because it allows me to stay in touch with my favorite domain.</i>	.943	-
<i>Task-related motivation</i>			
Classroom management-related motivation			
Self-Efficacy for Student Engagement	<i>As a teacher, I feel able to motivate students who show low interest in school work.</i>	.861	+0.357 ($p = .013$)
Self-Efficacy for Classroom Management	<i>As a teacher, I feel able to control disruptive behavior in the classroom.</i>	.957	-0.034 ($p = .680$)
Task Value	<i>Classroom management is useful.</i>	.818	-0.092 ($p = .404$)
Cost	<i>Classroom management is time consuming.</i>	.930	-0.065 ($p = .629$)
Instructional planning-related motivation			
Self-Efficacy	<i>As a teacher, I feel able to plan activities that cover the duration of the lesson.</i>	.859	+1.267 ($p < .001$)
Task Value	<i>Instructional planning is important.</i>	.814	-0.022 ($p = .855$)
Cost	<i>Instructional planning is demanding.</i>	.765	-0.353 ($p = .014$)

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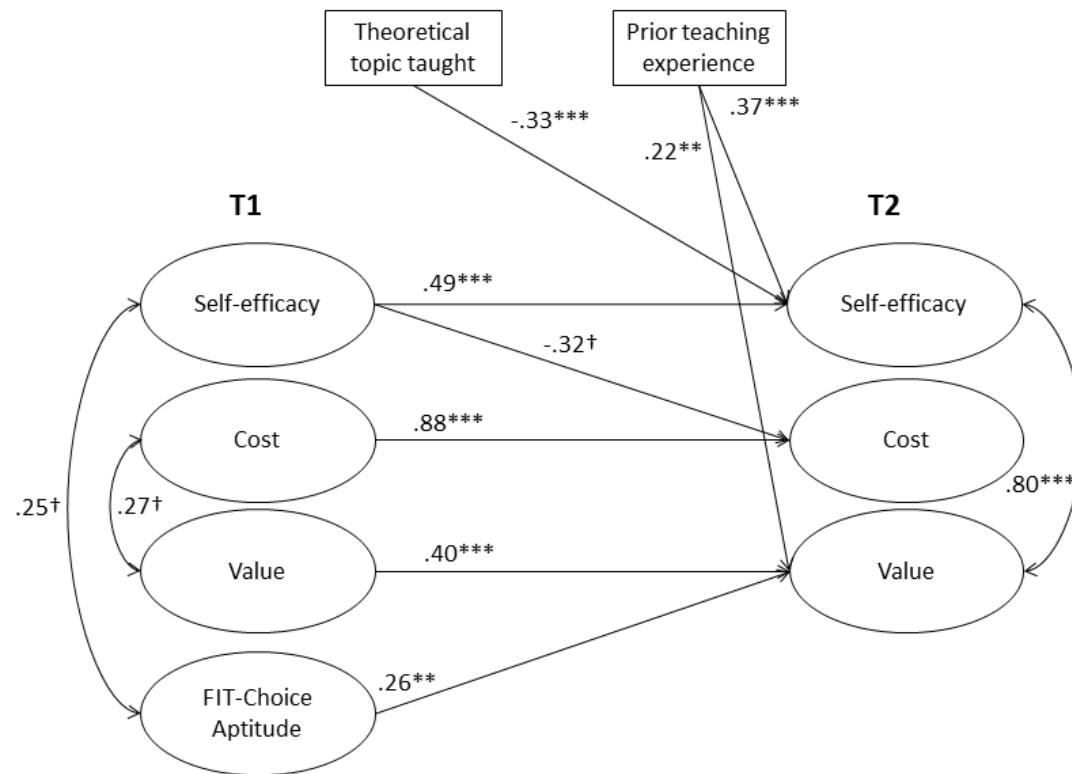


Figure 1. Structural equation modelling of teacher *task-related motivation* for instructional planning.

N = 102.

$\chi^2_{(101)} = 130.07, p = .027, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .05.$

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$.

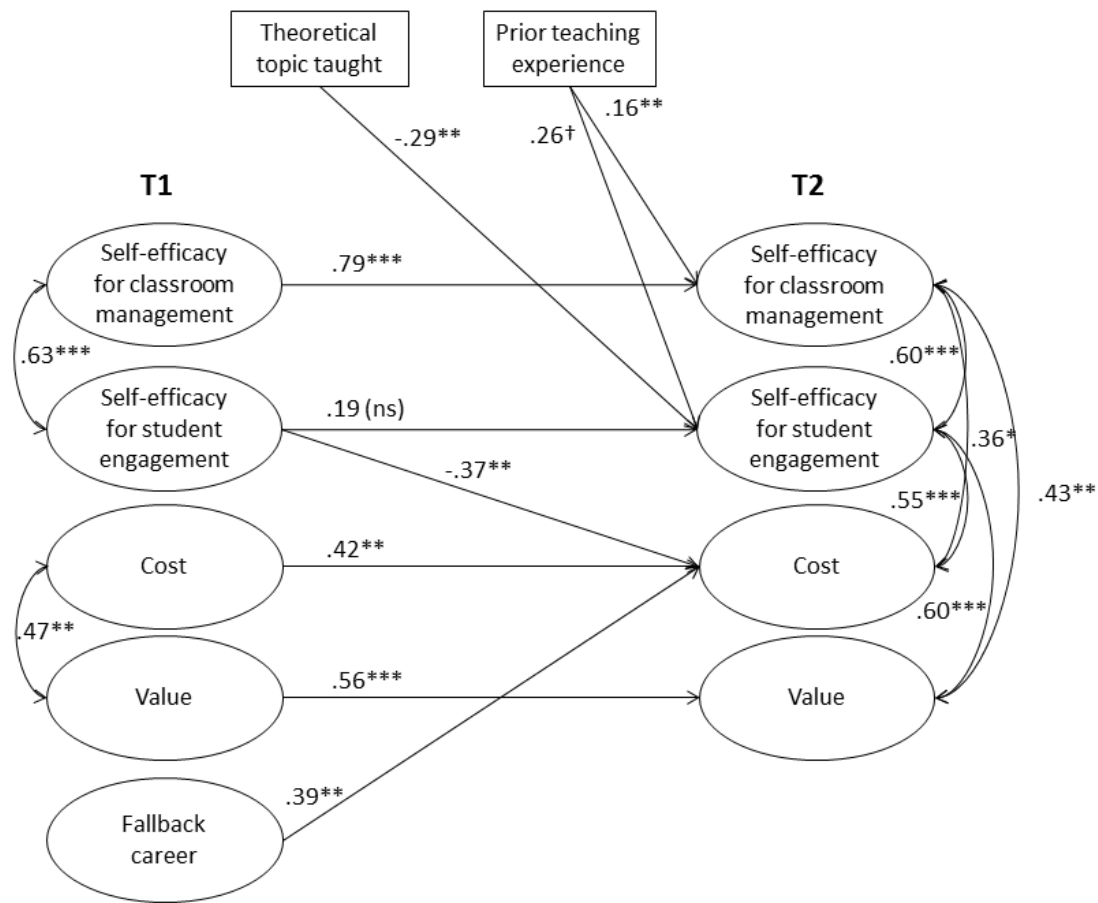


Figure 2. Structural equation modelling of teacher *task-related motivation* for classroom management.

N = 102.

$\chi^2_{(147)} = 200.83, p = .002, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .06$

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, $^{\dagger} p < .10$.