



An Investigation of the Relationship between Shanghai Preschool Teachers' Developmentally Appropriate Beliefs and Practices

Zou Bingjie

School of Primary Education, Shanghai Normal University Tianhua College, Shanghai, China
SS4023



INTRODUCTION

Teachers, as one of the important roles in the education process, hold individual beliefs not only about knowledge, teaching content and methods, but also about their students and themselves. The premise of all studies on teachers' beliefs is that there is a relationship between teachers' belief system and their actual practice; as such, that the research on teachers' beliefs has implications for teaching quality and student achievement. Interestingly, while a number of studies reported a moderate consistency between teachers' beliefs and their practice, there were also many studies reported a discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and teaching practice.

Despite the inconsistency founded in many studies, there is "no reason to discount the power of beliefs". The discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practice proves the complexity of the relationship and justifies the necessity to understand more about the belief-practice connection so as to better inform teachers, policymakers and teacher educators. It is even more crucial to understand teachers' beliefs and practice in the new era with a global trend of educational reform which calls for teachers to endorse new perceptions of teaching and adapt to new methods of teaching in practice.

RESULTS & ANALYSIS

The results found a moderate positive correlation between teachers' appropriate beliefs and practices ($r = .557$), and between teachers' inappropriate beliefs and practices ($r = .546$). Teachers who more strongly endorse the appropriate beliefs tend to more frequently engage in appropriate practices, while teachers who more strongly endorse inappropriate beliefs more frequently implement inappropriate practices.

This study results have several implications. First of all, teachers' belief systems concerning teaching and learning can be complex and can consist of different and even contradictory beliefs. Secondly, teachers' beliefs are related with their practices, but what they believe does not necessarily equate to what they practice. Thirdly, application of the Developmentally Appropriate Beliefs (DAP) principles issued in the US may not all be directly suitable for the Chinese context of early childhood education.

MAIN PROCESS

This quantitative study applied a survey design to investigate the relationship between Shanghai preschool teachers' beliefs and their self-reported practice of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). Altogether 182 respondents from 13 preschools in Shanghai completed Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey (three to five-year-olds) (including Teacher Beliefs Scale and Instructional Activities Scale) to report their DAP beliefs and practices in class. With these data, this study addressed the following research questions: To what extent are teachers' beliefs about developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and developmentally inappropriate practice (DIP) associated with their self-reported use of DAP and DIP?

CONCLUSION

The positive belief-practice correlation reported in this study and previous research proves a necessity to understand teachers' beliefs because it indeed is an indicator of teachers' actual practices in classroom. However, the belief-practice correlation is only moderate suggests teachers' beliefs may have an influence on their practices, but teachers, especially new teachers, may have difficulty in putting what they learned and believe into practice. In actual practice, teachers may diverge from what they believe because of contextual factors, such as the reform requirements and class size, etc.