

A STUDY OF STUDENTS ACHIEVEMENTS, MOTIVATION AND SELF PERCEPTION VIS-A-VIS TEACHER EXPECTATIONS IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS OF DELHI

Savita Kaushal*

ABSTRACT

The future of young children is in the hands of teachers and many of the teachers may be unaware of the importance of their expectations. The purpose of this paper is to explore and describe how teachers in Private School settings in Delhi attempt to communicate their expectations to students to help them develop positive self perception. It seeks to identify whether they believe these expectations affect student achievement, and what motivational strategies these teachers use to enhance their students' learning. This paper is based on a qualitative study theoretically informed by phenomenological hermeneutic inquiry. Data were collected using in-depth semi-structured open-ended interviews and results were critically analyzed and interpreted hermeneutically.

Key words: Teaching Learning Process, Authority of Learners, Teachers Authority, Socio-Cultural Context.

Introduction

School education system in India had undergone tremendous growth in terms of providing educational facilities to all children. The private schools have also shown tremendous growth in the last few years. Rise in disposable income, working mothers, nuclear families, and parents desiring to make their children best in everything are the main factors leading to the popularity of the private school sector. Sometimes the Private schools also face special challenges as low-income children also enter into the stream and moreover some of the private schools tend to employ teachers with qualifications and credentials lower than their peers in more affluent private schools. As a result, urban schools are at risk of providing weak instruction for those students who are most in need of opportunities for academic success. The Private schools are much more achievement-oriented as they have to show that they are better than other schools so as to increase their acceptance and marketability. Therefore the teachers have to focus a lot on getting good achievement i.e. making the private school sell with credibility. It has been established by research that teachers influence students' motivation through provision of experiences and communication of beliefs and expectancies (Green.S.K, 2002). Teacher expectation is a powerful tool (Good & Brophy, 2000, p.109) in the hands of teachers, which they can use effectively to shape their students' future achievements. High teachers' expectations produce high students' achievements and low expectations produce low achievements (Capel, Leask & Turner, 1995; Sadker & Sadker, 1988; Brookover et al., 1982).

Student learning is influenced by many factors, including: students' skills, expectations, motivation and behaviour; family resources, attitudes and support; peer group skills, attitudes and behaviour; school organisation, resources and climate; curriculum structure and content; and teacher skills, knowledge, attitudes and practices. Schools and classrooms are complex, dynamic environments, and identifying the effects of these varied factors, and how they influence and relate to each other – for different types of students and different types of learning – has been, and continues to be, a major focus of educational research. In 1968, Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson did a seminal study that established the notion of self-fulfilling prophecy. In other words, the teacher produces a level of academic

*Assistant Professor, Department of School and Non-Formal Education, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi.

achievement because of the teacher's expectations of the student's ability. In the study, researchers told teachers certain students in grades one through six in a San Francisco elementary school had a higher potential learning than other students. The results of the study showed the students designated with high potential had higher academic achievement than other students did in the study. In actuality, the high-potential students were picked at random and did not have higher potential. The study reported increased student achievement for those students where the teachers had higher expectations, self-fulfilling prophecy.

Several investigators (Snow 1969; Thorndike 1968; Wineburg 1987) have examined Rosenthal and Jacobson's study and found technical defects serious enough to cast doubt upon the accuracy of its findings. The media continued to tout the findings of the original study. In addition, the conclusions of Rosenthal and Jacobson and those that replicated their study were more subtle than first reported. The teachers had a false expectation of student potential. Trouilloud, et al (2002) and others demonstrated that teachers have accurate expectations of student learning abilities and therefore do not have false expectations. In addition, student self-perceived abilities have a mediating effect on the self-fulfilling prophecy (Trouilloud, et al 2002). This is something Rosenthal and Jacobson did not address. Student teacher interaction is also important in this regard. Teachers can motivate their students by boosting their self perception, which is imperative to perform better (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2000). Sense of achievements increase students' self esteem. Researchers (e.g. Leondari & Kiosseoglou, 1998) have attempted to find some link between self-perception and motivation. They state that realization of self is a key factor in motivational behaviour. Students' motivation to engage in a task is also influenced by the conception they hold of themselves (Jennings, 1993). Positive self perception to sustain motivation is important for the students to expend effort to complete a task.

Researchers found that younger children are more susceptible to teachers' expectancy effects (Jussim & Harber, 2005; Raudenbush, 1984) than students in higher grades, as they see themselves in the eyes of others (teachers, parents and other adults) and form self images. With high expectations they are more likely to form positive self-images and with low expectations their self-image is lowered. This will remain with them for the rest of their lives affecting their future achievement (Velez, 2006). This suggests a close correlation between teachers' expectations, self perception and their students' achievements. Researchers have discovered a cyclical pattern between teachers' expectations and students' achievements (e.g. Atwell, 2001; Brookover et al., 1982; Good & Brophy, 2000; Jussim, 1986; Jussim et al., 2005; Jussim & Harber, 2005). They believe teachers' expectations determine students' achievements.

It is important to know that how teachers communicate their expectations to their students and how they impact on their students' achievements. This paper provides insights related to teachers' expectations, motivation and self perception. It also provides a framework for teachers to organize and develop appropriate motivational strategies to enhance their students' self perception in order to increase their achievements.

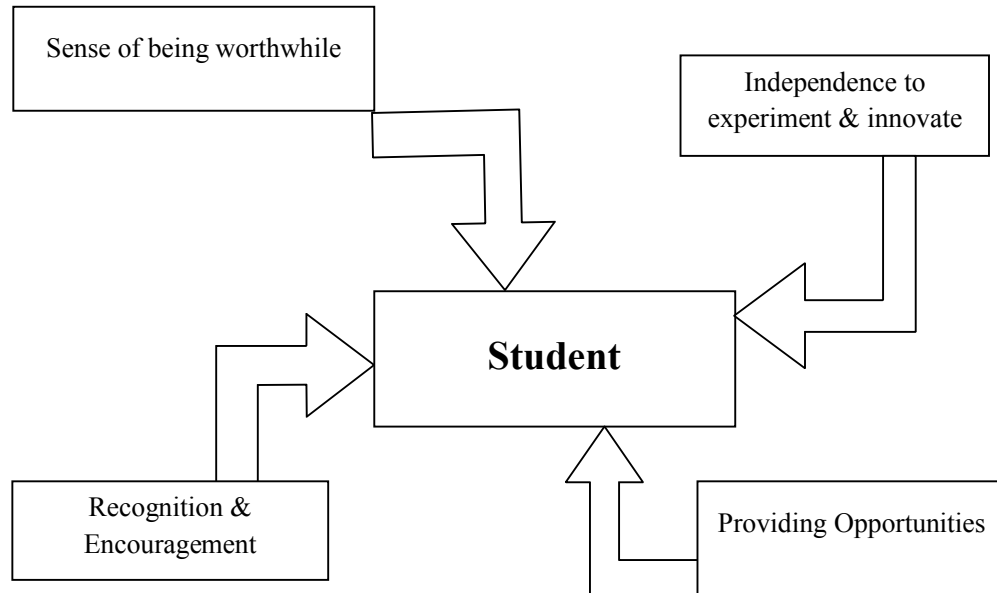


Figure 01: Strategies for Motivating Learners for Better Achievement

Conversely, when students are viewed as lacking in ability or motivation and are not expected to make significant progress, they tend to adopt this perception of themselves. Regrettably, some students, particularly those from certain social, economic, or ethnic groups, discover that their teachers consider them "incapable of handling demanding work" (Peggy Gonder 1991). Teachers' expectations for students—whether high or low—can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, students tend to give to teachers as much or as little as teachers expect of them.

About Research Objectives

This study is concerned with teachers' expectations about students' achievement. Previous research suggests that teacher's teaching styles are affected by the kind of expectations they hold for their students (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1969). The purpose of this study was to explore and describe how teachers in private school settings in Delhi form expectations of their students, whether they believe these expectations affect student achievement, and how these teachers attempt to communicate their expectations to students.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following questions in order to understand the phenomena of teacher expectations.

1. What do teachers understand by the notion of 'expectations'?
2. What expectations do they have of their students?
3. How do teachers form these expectations?

4. What factors affect their expectations?
5. How do teachers communicate their expectations?
6. What do they understand to be the relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement?
7. How do teachers believe they enact their expectations?

Methodology of the Study

Qualitative research methods have been seen as particularly useful in helping to find out the factors affecting teachers' expectations of their students' achievements, which is the focus of this study. Hermeneutic inquiry involves using a theoretical framework to focus the inquiry and to make decisions about the samples, subjects and research questions to be addressed. The theoretical framework of this study suggests that there is a strong correlation between teacher expectations and student achievements (Broke over et al., 1982; Good & Brophy; 1997, 2000; Jussim, 1986; Jussim & Harber, 2005). Students' achievements may confirm teacher expectations because these expectations create self-fulfilling prophecies. (Jussim, 1986; Jussim & Harber, 2005). Teachers adjust their teaching pedagogy and instruction to their expectations for their students and thereby treat their students differently (Cooper, 1986; Diamond, Randolph & Spillane, 2004; Good & Brophy, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1988), thus setting the stage for self-fulfilling prophecies to come true. Students, upon recognizing their teacher expectations, behave in a way that confirms to their teacher's expectations (Atwell, 2001; Brookover et al., 1982; Good and Brophy, 2000; Jussim, 1986; Jussim et al., 2005; Jussim & Harber, 2005). Thus, teacher expectations cause students' achievements. This theoretical framework informs the formulation of research questions and the selection of participants and clearly defines how the data are interpreted and findings are generated. Although there are many qualitative research methods to understand the contextual features of experience that affect teachers' practices, case study method was used for this study to achieve as full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible (Merriam,1988). Data were analysed by identifying themes and meanings interpreted in collaboration with the respondents following the principle of co-constitutionality.

Sample of the Study

The study was based on data collected from ten secondary private school teachers from five Private Schools of East Delhi. In-depth semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted to get maximum response and deep understanding of the lived experiences of the respondents.

Findings

The teachers claimed that the structure of the school, and having parents and students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, are some of the factors that interfere with their expectations. The teachers claimed they are better judges of their students' achievements than their parents; who have unrealistic expectations of their children and push their children too hard for goals which they are unable to achieve. *Teachers believe that they can affect students' achievements by promoting self esteem.* All the teachers during the interviews informed that they motivated their students by boosting their self esteem in order to enhance their achievements. They believed that teachers need to use different emotional and pedagogical strategies to motivate them. The participating teachers made three main claims in this regard.

- Teachers face a lot of challenges with mixed ability groups particularly children with learning difficulties.
- Teachers can improve their students' self perception by adopting a flexible approach in their expectations.

- Teacher's positive remarks and feedback have a motivating impact on their students.

Their first claim refers to mixed ability grouping and the challenges faced by these teachers. This mixed ability grouping is an issue for these teachers, as they may have a wide gap ability-wise ranging from children within the same class. So most of the time they are running activities in a number of groups in order to cater for differentiation, which is difficult. These teachers feel they cannot give personal or one to one attention to their less able students in a class of on average 35 students. Teachers expressed that they had to repeat themselves many times to help these students learn as they tend to forget things easily. They need a lot of reinforcement to reproduce what has been taught.

Teachers faced even more challenges in motivating their students with learning difficulties who have developed negative self perceptions for themselves. So teachers had to put extra effort in boosting up their self esteem. To boost up their self esteem, teachers have to devise a special curriculum for them, photocopying work sheets (sometimes in larger font size), sometimes consulting work from other grades to match the tasks with students' ability levels. That means they have to put extra effort, time and energy to provide them with such tasks. They also felt that it's hard to manage these activities alongside other class activities. Thus these students with special needs are a real challenge for these teachers in terms of planning, conducting and carrying out different activities in order to enhance their self perception to motivate them to learn.

The second claim is that teachers believe by using a flexible approach in their expectations for their students they can motivate them to perform better. They can improve their self perception and thus improve their performance. They do not expect the same from all their students and thus have different expectations from all their students. These teachers believe in making adjustments and having flexibility in handling the curriculum and having expectations to meet their students' individual needs. They believe we cannot have the same expectations from all their students.

These teachers believe in having realistic expectations of their students. If they expect too much and their students' can not achieve it, this will demotivate them. Once the students feel they can do a task and feel happy about it, this will automatically affect their self esteem in a positive manner which will help in forming a positive self image and enhancing their achievements (Lindsay and Dockrell, 2000).

The teachers believed in tailoring their instructional practices to the academic levels of their students, breaking tasks in little chunks or giving simpler tasks in the beginning and later introducing more difficult or challenging tasks, or dropping some activities which are beyond their level of understanding and doing in small steps. Their motive was to motivate their students by giving them tasks which they can easily accomplish without getting frustrated. Bob explained how he conducted such activities as a part of curriculum that he plans for his high and low achievers. These teachers' believed that positive comments and remarks had a powerful effect on students. The third claim these teachers made in this regard was that their positive comments or remarks motivated their students. They feel highly motivated and try to please their teacher further and put all their effort into their work to listen to these comments again. Their self perception improves which will improve their performance. These teachers say they deliberately choose certain comments and remarks to motivate their student. For the weaker children I always be very positive with my comments and I really mean it and I have to encourage them. The participating teachers believe it is important to give positive feedback to motivate their students. They think children who have negative self perceptions of themselves lack confidence and are usually scared of making mistakes. These teachers always try to boost their students' self esteem by telling them that we are human beings and we all make mistakes.

Discussions

This issue of promoting self esteem in students to enhance their academic achievements is clearly an important issue for these teachers. If teachers are able to build a high self perception for these students they will be motivated to achieve better throughout their lives as this high self image will stay with them forever (Velez,2006). These teachers use emotional and pedagogical strategies to communicate their expectations, and as a result, students are formulating self images in their minds. These teachers reported that they project onto their students the kind of expectations they have for them, in direct or indirect ways, whichever they choose as best for their students. They convey to their students, through their behaviour, that they see strengths and weaknesses. These teachers believe their students, in turn, formulate self images and expectations for themselves based on the way they have been conveyed to them. These teachers' ideas are consistent with Deans (1996), who believes that small children see themselves in the eyes of others (teachers, parents and other adults) and form self images. With high expectations they are more likely to form high self-images and with low expectations their self-image is lowered.

These teachers reported using a range of ways, such as reinforcing concepts, tailoring their instructions and adapting the curriculum to enable their students to do the tasks successfully and feel motivated. Teachers ideas are in line with Researchers (Blatchman, 1992) who believe with each success at school children have enhanced sense of motivation and self perception. In contrast, with each failure at school children feel demotivated and develop low self perception for themselves (Chapman, 1988). Montgomery (1994) found children with learning difficulties generally have lower academic self perception. These teachers use different emotional strategies to help boost their students' self esteem, especially if they have developed negative self perceptions for themselves. They believe their positive feedback motivates and negative feedback demotivates students (Rubie-Davies, 2007; Velez, 2006). These teachers' ideas also align with Lindsay and Dockrell (2000) who believe negative feedback and failure at school will cause frustration and establish lower self image and with each success at school children feel motivated and feel encouraged to learn. However Babad (1990) believes that, even though teachers try to provide emotional support and show more concern and vigilance in teaching low-expectancy students, the fact remains that these low achievers are the victims of more negative teacher affect. Moreover, these teachers communicate their expectations to their high and low achievers differently. They challenge their high achievers and give lower level tasks to their low achievers. It is understandable that these teachers are not giving challenging tasks to their low ability students because they fear that when their students will fail they will be demotivated and develop low self images. But as Good & Brophy (2000) indicate if teachers communicate their low expectations to their students over a long period of time its more likely that negative self-fulfilling effects will occur, rather than sustaining expectations effect, which are more devastating. From phenomenological point of view, this differential treatment between high and low achievers based on their teachers' preconceived notions about ability will result in lasting low self images if teachers keep communicating their low expectations to their students.

These teachers also believe that positive feedback motivate and negative feedback demotivate students ((Brophy 1987; Velez, 2006). Their ideas are in line with Lindsay & Dockrell(2000) ideas who believe negative feedback and failure at school will cause frustration and establish a lower self image. These teachers' make all the effort to show high expectations for their students through their comments and feedback to motivate them. These teachers' ideas are consistent with researchers' (e.g. Parsons, Kaczala and Meece, 1982) ideas who found that expressions of high expectations raised students' confidence. Thus

the role of an educator is of immense importance in improving their students self perception by demonstrating high expectations for their students to motivate them to learn.

However these teachers reported issues with mixed ability groupings as well. However research has shown that working in small ability groupings is actually good for students as they work in close proximity with teachers (Benn& Chitty, 1996). Alpet (1974) and Weinstein (1976) suggest that whole class settings often give an impression of teachers' favouritism of high expectation over low expectation students, whereas small group settings show few differences and teachers more intensively involved with low expectation students. Lyle (1999) believes that mixed ability grouping is effective for 'cognitive processes' particularly to develop in-depth understanding of difficult concept collaboratively with others. Stevens and Crawley (1994), McNamara and Moreton(1997) highly recommend mixed ability grouping as they found such grouping is highly effective in enhancing students' motivation, self concept and social skills. Furthermore, Researchers Jussim and Harber (2005) found less powerful effect of self-fulfilling prophecies in ability grouping than heterogonous classes. These small group settings are no doubt challenging for these teachers but researchers (e.g. Johnson & Johnson, 1990, 1994; Kagan, 1995) believe teachers need training to run these groups effectively. As far as expectations are concerned, it is reasonable for teachers to have different expectations of students because all individuals are different. But teachers' expectations should not be lower for anyone and should not rigidly maintained (Babad, Inbar, and Rosenthal ,1982; van Houtte, 2006). That may result in Galatea effects that can hamper students' academic achievements. Teachers need to keep their expectations high and communicate them as clearly as possible to let the Golem effects to occur to enhance their students' academic achievements (Rubie-Davies, 2006). However teacher student interaction is also important in this regard. Teachers' differential treatment towards low and high achievers within mixed-ability groups may set in motion negative self-fulfilling effects (Babad, Inbar, and Rosenthal, 1982; Gottfredson, 1995; Jussim & Harbar, 2005; Kuklinski and Weinstein, 2000) which may have an adverse effect on students' motivation and self concept. This will impede their students learning instead of augmenting it. Thus, mixed ability grouping is challenging yet effective if handled appropriately.

These teachers also need training in classroom management skills regarding discipline and running activities with mixed ability groups. Small group activities are very effective in engaging children and for allowing teachers to pay personal attention to them however, managing group activities is challenging especially when low- ability students are also involved in the group activity (Doyle, 2004). Researchers (e.g. Doyle, 2004) laid great emphasis on management and rated it higher than instruction because it requires alertness and skills on the part of teachers. Doyle (2004) believes if teachers lack good management skills then the whole activity will be fruitless. Thus it becomes imperative for a teacher to have some training in handling low-expectancy students during group work. Diamond, Randolph and Spillane (2004) found that in some schools teachers who had a strong sense of responsibility for students' performance adjusted their instructional practices to meet students' needs and they did not look only at their students' deficits. Their views are also consistent with researchers (e.g. Atwell, 2001; Ross & Gray, 2006; Wertheim & Leyser, 2002) who believe that high efficacy teachers try harder, use management strategies that stimulate student autonomy, attend more closely to low ability student needs, and modify students' ability perceptions. Thus, this shows quite clearly that teacher's own sense of responsibility and self efficacy counts a lot in the process of forming self images and teachers need to aware of this important fact. Teachers need to have high self efficacy and high expectations for themselves in order to help children to have high self perception (Diamond, Randolph and Spillane, 2004).

This study reveals a strong correlation between motivation and self perception. And through the interplay of teachers' expectations, teachers can motivate their students to learn by boosting their self esteem. These teachers are trying to provide them opportunities and make sure their students succeed and show their trust and belief in their students' ability to succeed. Like Velez (2006), they believe "instructors demonstrate belief in student's abilities and validate self-worth" (p.16). Velez (2006) argues that the inward belief to succeed is central to motivation and is essential for lifelong success. Velez (2006) also strongly believes that educators can cultivate this self worth in themselves, their classrooms and their students through their intrinsic belief in them. Without that students cannot be motivated in a real sense.

The study offers several policy implications. The study confirms the validity of the concept of the interconnectivity of motivation, self perception and teacher expectations. In order to motivate children, teachers need to enhance their self perception. Low self perception leads to lower level of motivation, which in turn results in low academic achievements or vice versa. Thus they together have a profound impact on students' achievements. The study, in unison with others (eg Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), clearly reveals the fact that a lot more learning is taking place in classrooms where children are motivated to learn. However a teacher should reassess their expectations from time to time, because even if their expectancies reflect accurate perceptions of students' abilities, their performance or behaviour may change in the course of the school year. Alderman (2004) called this kind of teacher behaviour as "the sustaining expectation effect", which occurs when a teacher has formed an expectation about a students, and although the student' behaviour has changed, the teacher "continues to respond to the student in the same way).

References

- Alderman, M. K. (2004). *Motivation for achievement: possibilities for teaching and learning*. Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Atwell, N. S. W. (2001). *Appalachian women teaching the future*. *US Department of Education*.
- Brookover, W., Beamer, L., Eftim, H., Hathaway, D., Lezotte, L., Miller, S., et al. (1982). *Creating effective schools: An in-service program for enhancing school learning climate and achievement*. . *Florida: Learning Publication, Inc*.
- Brophy, J. (1987). Synthesis of research on strategies for motivating students to learn. *Educational leadership*, 45(2), 40-48.
- Capel, S., Leask, M., & Turner, T. (1995). *Learning to teach in secondary school: A companion to school Experience*. London: Rutledge.
- Diamond, J. B., Randolph, A., & Spillane, J. P. (2004). Teachers' expectations and sense of responsibility for student learning: The importance of race, class, and organizational habitus. . *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 35(1), 75-98.
- Doyle, W. (2006). Ecological approaches to classroom management. In C. M. Evertson & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 97-125). London: Lawrence erlbaum associates, Inc.
- Fraine, B. D., Damme, J. V., & Onghena, P. (2002). Accountability of schools and teachers: what should be taken into account. *European Educational Research Journal*, 1(3), 403-428.
- Good.T.L, & Brophy, J. E. (2000). *Looking in classrooms*. United States: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc.
- Green, S. K. (2002). Using an expectancy-value approach to examine teachers' motivational strategies. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, 989-1005.

- Jussim, L. (1986). Self-fulfilling prophecies: A theoretical and integrative review. . *American Psychological Association*, 93(4), 429-445.
- Jussim, L., & Harber, K. D. (2005). Teacher expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies: Known and unknown, resolved and unresolved controversies. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*. 9(2), 131-155.
- Jussim, L., Harber, K. D., Crawford, J. T., Cain, T. R., & Cohen, F. (2005). Social reality makes the social mind. Self-fulfilling prophecy, stereotypes bias, and accuracy. *Interaction Studies*, 6(1), 85-102.
- Leondari, A., Syngollitou, E., & Kiosseoglou, G. (1998). Academic achievements motivation and future selves. *Educational Studies*, 24(2), 153-163.
- Lindsay, J. & Dockrell, J.(2000). The behaviour and self-esteem of children with specific speech and language difficulties. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70, 583-601.
- Gonder, Peggy Odell. "Caught in the Middle: How To Unleash the Potential of Average Students." Arlington, Virginia: American Association of School Administrators, 1991. 27 pages. ED 358 554
- M.P, S., & Sadker, D. M. (1988). *Teachers, schools and society*: McGraw Hill Publishers. New York.
- Raudenbush, S., W. (1984). Magnitude of teacher expectancy effects on pupils on IQ as a function of the credibility of expectancy inductions: A synthesis of findings from 18 experiments. . *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76, 85-97.
- Rosenthal, R., & Jacobson, L. (1968). Pygmalion in the Classroom. *The Urban Review*, 16-20.
- Ross, D. D., Bondy, E., Galingane, C., & Hambacher, E. (2008). Promoting academic engagement through insistence; Being a warm demander. *Childhood Education*, 84(3), 142-147.
- Snow, R. (1969). Unfinished Pygmalion. *Contemporary Psychology*, 197-200.
- Thorndike, R. (1968). Review of Pygmalion in the Classroom. *American Educational Research Journal*, 708-711.
- Trouilloud, D., Sarrazin, P., Martinek, T., & Guillet, E. (2002). The Influence of Teacher Expectations on Student's Achievement in Physical Education Classes: Pygmalion Revisited. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 591-607.
- Velez, J. (2006). Motivating students by cultivating self-worth. *The Agricultural Education Magazine*, 78(4), 15-17.
- Wertheim, & Leyser, Y. (2002). Efficacy beliefs background variables and differentiated instruction of Israeli Prospective teachers. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 96(1), 54-63.
- Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. (2000). Expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation. . *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 68-81.
- Wineburg, S. (1987). The Self-Fulfillment of the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy. *Educational Researcher*, 28-37.