



## RELATION BETWEEN TEACHER BELIEFS AND PRACTICES: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH

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### **Abstract**

*Teachers' beliefs are important concepts in understanding teachers' thought processes, classroom practices and changes in learning to teach. Many researchers concluded that teachers' educational beliefs drive their classroom actions and their professional development. A teacher's belief and its practices in classrooms depend on different aspects. However, the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices is not simple. In the field of teacher education, it is crucial to understand the whole dimension of this relationship. Therefore, this complex issue needs more studies to determine and understand this issue at length. This review article tries to put together some of the studies from language education.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher Education, Teacher Belief and Practices, Language Teaching.*

### **Introduction**

Belief is an important concept to understand teachers' thought process, their instructional practices and many more things. It determines their classroom actions. "In most current conceptions the perceived relationship between beliefs and actions is interactive. Beliefs are thought to drive action; however, experiences and reflection on action may lead to changes in and/or additions to beliefs." (Richardson, 1996). Therefore, belief and action are closely related. In other words, belief and action are interactive. Belief drives action.

Experiences are the most pivotal in developing someone's belief. Richardson (1996) explains the three categories of experiences. First one is personal experience, the second is experience with schooling and instruction. The last one is experienced with formal knowledge. "Personal experience includes aspects of life that go into the formation of world view ..." (Richardson, 1996). She further explains it as "belief about self in relation to others", "relationship of schooling and society", "personal, familial, and cultural understanding". Schooling and instruction are the second category of experience. Trainee teachers come into a teacher education program with a set of beliefs. That belief is built on years of schooling as a student. Therefore, students have a tacit understanding of teaching and learning process, the culture of the classroom, instructions and many more things. Those tacit understandings are gradually turned into firm belief. Formal education comes in the last category. In this category, the structure of a particular subject matters and pedagogical knowledge are the wider area. These two areas have been explored by researchers. Several important aspects of classroom actions come under the umbrella of pedagogical knowledge. According to Richardson "Classroom management", "model of teaching" and, "classroom environment" (1996) and many more concepts come under this.

Experiences are also accountable for change in the belief system. Classroom experience is one pivotal aspect which influences teachers' belief system. Apart from classroom experience, many other aspects help in development and change in the belief system. So, the beliefs undergo gradual modification during the practices because all these are influenced by workload, curriculum and classroom realities. A teacher may spend more time on instructional practices and classroom activities in accordance with her beliefs. Those beliefs, after so many cycles of verification and denial, are the foundations of the teaching processes in classrooms.

### **Research Studies**

Chou (2008) states that very few studies on teachers' beliefs in the area of second language reading instruction have shown a vague picture of teachers' belief construct in teaching reading. (as cited in Khonamri, 2010). "Therefore, more research on exploring teachers' beliefs and the actual instructional practices regarding reading is necessary" (Khonamri, 2010).

In the study with forty eight participants, Chou (2008) explored discrepancies and consistencies between teachers' belief about reading theories and their practical teaching activities. The study was based on the assumption that teachers' belief decidedly influences them. Findings confirmed that no significant differences were found between the teachers' belief and their practices in their reading approaches. On the similar line, the study of Rupley and Logan (1984) found the consistencies in elementary teachers' beliefs and their instructional decision making (as cited in Fang, 1996). Opposite of these above mentioned study, Basturkmen, Loewen, Ellis (2004) found inconsistencies between second language teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom practices (as cited in Khonamri, 2010).



In a study of English as a second language, Johnson (1992) pointed out that ESL teachers hold clearly defined theoretical beliefs which reflect in their approaches to teaching in classrooms. However, a study of Khonamri and Salimi (2010), showed contradictory results. They examined the relation between EFL high school teachers' belief and their instructional practices regarding reading strategies. Fifty-seven EFL high school teachers were selected for the study. The result showed some discrepancy between teachers' belief and their self reported practices.

Anders and Richardson (1991), conducted a study to determine the relationship between teachers' belief about the teaching of reading comprehension and their classroom practices. They have used interview techniques followed by classroom observation. Thirty nine teachers from grades four, five, and six were subjects of this study. The result showed that the beliefs of teachers relate to their classroom practices in the reaching of reading comprehension. Among the thirty nine teachers, one teacher was found who is not practising his classroom reading comprehension instruction as per his belief. This case proposes that the teacher was in the process of changing beliefs. In a study, Deford (1985) developed a multiple-choice instrument (TORP) to differentiate among teachers on the basis of theory of reading and validated it on the basis of their classroom observation. She found a strong and significant relationship between the TORP score and the predictions. Conflicting to the study of Deford (1985), and Richardson (1991), one previous study was done by Duffy (1981) concluded that teachers' theoretically based conceptions are not related to their teaching of reading practices. On the same line, Hoffman and Kugle (1982) found no correlation between teachers' theoretical understanding and classroom practices.

Interestingly, other studies have mixed results. Kinzer (1988) compared elementary inservice and preservice teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices. Both preservice teachers and inservice teachers exhibited similar theoretical understanding however inservice teachers tended to be less consistent in their choice of instructional lessons. These results have supported by other similar studies, Readence, Konopak and Wilson, (1991) elementary and secondary school teachers were the subject for this study. It reveals that the link between teachers' theoretical beliefs and their classroom practices varies from very consistent to very inconsistent (as cited in Fang, 1996).

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