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Collegial Trust and the Organizational Context of the Teacher Workplace

The Role of a Homogeneous Teachability Culture

Intro

- **Purpose**
 - Adding to the knowledge of the social organization of schools
 - Attention to the individual teacher's trust in colleagues vs. faculty trust
 - Exploring contextual school conditions as facilitators of collegial trust
 - Does homogeneity of teachability culture mediate the impact of SES composition?
- **Relevance**
 - Collegial trust supports well functioning professional learning communities^{1,2,3}
- **Academical embeddedness**
 - Growing interest in trust within educational research vs. little large-scale research
 - Collegial trust as indicator of schools' organizational social capital⁴

Collegial trust and the organizational school context

- **Teacher trust in colleagues** is a **complex and multidimensional** concept
 - *A teacher's willingness to be vulnerable to the other teachers in school based on the confidence that the latter are benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open*⁵
 - The importance of role expectations⁶
- **The essence of organizational culture**⁷
 - Organizational members' underlying basic assumptions
 - e.g. teachers' teachability assumptions⁸
- **From assumptions to trust formation**^{7,9}
 - Equal assumptions → Analogous interpretation of the work environment
 - Collegial trust development ← Expectations being met ← Similar behaviours
- **Homogeneity of organizational culture**¹⁰
 - The degree to which members share assumptions, beliefs, norms, values,...
 - e.g. Teachers holding similar teachability assumptions

Hypothesis 1: *A homogeneous teachability culture fosters trust in colleagues.*
- **Schools as client-serving organizations**¹¹
 - Working class students: to ignore or to adjust? → teachers experience tensions¹²
 - Less divergent ideas about the students' teachability will arise in elitist schools

Hypothesis 2: *The higher the social class background of the student body is, the more homogeneous the staff's teachability culture is.*

 - Faculty trust is more fragile in socioeconomic disadvantaged schools¹³: but why?

Hypothesis 3: *A homogeneous teachability culture mediates the positive association between trust in colleagues and a high SES composition.*

Methodology

- **Data**
 - Flemish Educational Assessment 2004-2005
 - 80 schools with > 5 teachers responding (cf. critical mass for aggregation)
 - 2.091 teachers & 11.872 students (third and/or fifth grade)
- **Measures**
 - Trust in colleagues (7 items)³ → Cronbach's alpha = 0.89
 - Homogeneity of teachability culture:
 - Teachability assumptions (31 items)⁸ → Cronbach's alpha = 0.94
 - ICC [(BMS-WMS)/BMS]¹⁴ of teachability assumptions = 0.92
 - A staff's standard deviation on teachability assumptions * (-1)¹⁵
 - SES school composition: highest occupational prestige of father and mother¹⁶
- **Data analysis**
 - Control variables:
 - School level: sector, size, ethnic composition, content of teachability culture
 - Teacher level: gender, ses, experience, subject, teaching hours
 - Multilevel analysis
 - Meso-mediational model testing¹⁷

Discussion

- **Contribution to educational research**
 - School teachers holding similar assumptions about the students' teachability facilitates the development of a teacher's trust in colleagues
 - A homogeneous teachability culture is more likely to occur in elitist schools
 - A homogeneous teachability culture explains why trust in colleagues is stronger in schools where the student body is marked with a higher social class background
 - Trust in colleagues is stronger in private schools: *the role of sense of community*^{18?}
 - Trust in colleagues is stronger when there is a mismatch in ethnic background between the student body and the teaching staff: *category-based trust*^{19?}
- **The organizational context of the teacher workplace affects collegial trust development within the teaching staff**
- **A contribution to the theory on how SES composition influences school outcomes**
- **The backside of too much collegial trust**
 - Autonomy is an important aspect of the teacher profession²⁰
 - A possible impediment to professional ties outside the own school organization²¹
- **Limitations**
 - A single approach of homogeneity of staff culture
 - A unidirectional measure of collegial trust

Results

Descriptive statistics of and correlations among the school-level variables

Variables (N=80)	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Teachability culture (homogeneity)	-11.95	3.38					
2. Teachability culture (content)	100.26	10.36	.47**				
3. School sector ^a	-	-	-.20	-.23*			
4. School size	477.52	279.55	.24*	.32**	-.16		
5. Ethnic composition	13.40	18.04	-.07	-.61**	.31**	-.21	
6. SES composition	4.93	1.15	.41**	.85**	-.31**	.35**	-.74**

Note: ^a private schools coded 0, public schools coded 1.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Results of stepwise multilevel analyses of organizational school characteristics, teacher characteristics, and teacher trust in colleagues

Variables	Trust in colleagues				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	27.378***	27.379***	27.170***	26.640***	27.173***
Independent school variables					
School sector	-0.135**	-0.126**	-0.118**		-0.112**
School size	0.054	0.009	0.001		-0.005
Ethnic composition	0.077	0.199**	0.160**		0.115 ^a
SES composition		0.187**	0.136*		0.065 ^b
Mediators					
Teachability culture (homogeneity)				0.101*	0.090*
Teachability culture (content)				0.057	
Independent teacher variables					
Gender			0.055*	0.059*	0.053*
SES			0.018	0.019	0.019
Experience			-0.018	-0.020	-0.018
Teaching hours			-0.027	-0.024	-0.027
Subject			-0.034	-0.028	-0.030
Variance components					
Intercept U0	1.402***	1.155***	1.051	1.213	0.813
Gender U1			0.535	0.611	0.566
SES U2			0.110**	0.116**	0.108**
Experience U3			0.0004	0.0004	0.0004
Teaching hours U4			0.001	0.001	0.001
Subject U5			0.692	0.710	0.712

Note - Presented are the standardized gamma coefficients and the variance components U.
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001; a: p = .074; b: p = 0.343.

Conclusion

- The role of the **organizational school context** for collegial trust formation
- **School leaders** should focus on creating similar conceptions among their teachers about the teachability of the students in school in order to:
 - Strengthen the level of social capital within the teaching staff
 - Increase the successfulness of teachers' professional development

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