

NEW TEACHER STUDY GROUP #5 - JANUARY

TEACHER BELIEFS AND ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Attribution Theory and Two Theories of Intelligence

Attribution theory is concerned with the explanations we give ourselves when we succeed for why we succeeded and, when we fail, why we failed. It's the internal talk inside our heads.

- Research finds 4 basic reasons to which we account for success or failure (Weiner):
 1. Ability: *I'm not good at math.*
 2. Effort: *I didn't study, I did an extra draft of my paper, I did extra practice problems*
 3. Task Difficulty: *must have been an easy/hard test.*
 4. Luck: *I guess I studied the right chapter.*
- Three axes:
 1. **Locus:** internal=me vs. external=not me
 2. **Stability:** constant or something that can change
 3. **Controllability**

→ Which of these do you perceive to be “controllable” as the student?
Effort is the only one completely under our control

	INTERNAL ATTRIBUTIONS	EXTERNAL ATTRIBUTIONS
Constant (Stable)	<i>Ability</i>	<i>Task Difficulty</i>
Variable (Unstable)	<i>Effort</i>	<i>Luck</i>

The explanations we give ourselves are based on perceptions, and together they influence:

- Our self-concept
- Our expectations for future situations
- Our feelings of power and efficacy
- Our subsequent motivation to put forth effort

If I believe external factors make the most difference:

- I will be less likely to try, More likely to experience failure → feedback loop.
- If I do succeed, well, I got lucky (I studied the right pages, the test was too easy).

If I believe internal factors make a difference,

- I feel in control and will be more likely to try, hence more likely to succeed!
- If I fail, then I'm more likely to re-group and consider how to be more effective in my effort.

Two Theories of Intelligence

There are two dominant mindsets about intelligence:

Innate Ability Theory

- It comes with us as a **package** at birth
- **Fixed** amount: how much intellectual ability we have doesn't change in our lives
- **Unevenly distributed**: some have more - some have less
- **Deterministic**: intellectual ability determines how far a person can go and how well they'll do, especially academically

Students with a fixed mindset believe that if you have the ability, you shouldn't need effort. They can become overly concerned with how smart they are, and seek tasks that will prove their intelligence, and when they fail they are more likely to hide it than ask for help.

Effort-Based Mindset

"Smart is not something you are; smart is something you get by working hard and working smart."

Effective Effort is working hard and using learning strategies to work smart.

Ability affects whom gets it faster when you leave the starting gate. But the brain can get there for anyone; it just might take longer for some.