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# Understanding Students' Motivational Beliefs and Academic Engagement: A Case Study of an African International Student

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***Abstract***

*Motivational beliefs, especially self-efficacy, are very important in understanding students' academic engagement and achievement. Students' self-efficacy influences their academic decisions, choices, and learning behaviours. Building on a case of an African international student identified as Frank, this case study illustrates the influence of socio-cultural contexts on students' development of motivational beliefs, such as self-efficacy, across the school years. Specifically, it considers how Frank's social expectations, goals, cultural norms, school structure, and experience of teacher support shaped his motivational beliefs and influenced his academic engagement. The article emphasizes the need to understand how students' motivational beliefs and academic engagement are situated in context. Implications for theory, practice, and research are discussed.*

Motivational beliefs, or individuals' perceptions that drive their actions, are very important in understanding one's drive to achieving a set goal. Self-efficacy, as a motivational belief proposed by Bandura (1977), refers to individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to perform a task successfully. Motivational beliefs determine how students participate in learning tasks. Research has shown some developmental patterns in students' motivational beliefs across their school years, especially as they progressed from elementary to high school (K-12). For example, Eccles et al. (1998) and Liou et al. (2021) observed that student motivational beliefs, including self-efficacy, tend to decrease from elementary to secondary school. These variations in students' motivational beliefs, which influence their motivation and engagement, have been linked to their personal characteristics and socio-cultural contexts (Anyichie et al., 2023; Liou et al., 2021).

Much research, involving western-developed theories and students from the western countries with independent sense of self, have tried to explain motivation and its development through a psychological lens. However, less research has considered how those motivational theories are situated in non-western students' cultural contexts with interdependent sense of self (King & McInerney, 2014). Students from both western and non-western countries with individualistic and collectivist cultures populate our classes. Thus, more effort is needed in examining the role of socio-cultural contexts (e.g., the values, customs, religious beliefs, norms, social structures of a particular community), and individuals in multiple layers of contexts (e.g., individualistic and collectivist cultures) in the development of non-western students' motivational beliefs. This understanding is important in designing culturally appropriate instructional practices to better support all learners in today's multicultural classroom contexts where students are influenced by many cultural groups.

This case study aims to advance our understanding of the possible influences of students' cultural background, societal expectations and school structure on their motivational beliefs, and how those shape their academic decisions, choices, behaviours and learning engagement. Specifically, it appraises the learning engagement of a non-western international African student (i.e., Frank) in the light of motivational beliefs, especially self-efficacy. The author starts by describing motivational beliefs, especially self-efficacy and its sources, and engagement. Next, he situates the article in Frank's background. The article continues by tracing Frank's developmental trajectories of motivational beliefs and self-efficacy over the school years, how those were related to his engagement, and the potential influences of context in that

development. Finally, this reflective case study considers the implications of Frank's experiences for educational practice and future research.

## Motivational Beliefs and Self-Efficacy: Influence on Engagement

Motivational beliefs describe a wide range of perceptions that fuel an individual's engagement in an event or behaviour. These beliefs, such as academic self-efficacy (Usher et al., 2023), goals (Ames, 1992; Huang, 2016), and task values (Harackiewicz, et al., 2016) are critical in learning. Motivational beliefs determine students' learning behaviours, including how much effort to invest in a learning activity, the kinds of choices to make, staying on task, and whether to persist in the face of challenge. One of the major motivational beliefs commonly studied in education is self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy describes students' judgements and beliefs about their capability to be successful or not in performing a learning task (Bandura, 1977). There are four major sources of influences on self-efficacy development: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1977). Mastery or past experience describes how students' interpretation of their past experience or performance influences their beliefs about their capability in successfully completing a task. For example, students who were successful at solving a quadratic equation in the past will most likely believe in their capability to succeed when faced with a similar equation. Likewise, students who were not successful in the past will less likely judge themselves to be capable of succeeding in the future. Vicarious experience illustrates how students' experience of others' performances shapes their judgement about their own capability in being successful in performing similar task. For example, students who observe a classmate's success in completing a high-quality essay writing might judge themselves capable of writing a good essay as well. On the other hand, if a student who is perceived as being intelligent struggles in completing a calculus assignment, other lower achieving students might consider themselves less capable of performing well in the same assignment. Social or verbal persuasion refers to the messages students receive that influence their judgement about what they are able to do or not. For instance, students who receive positive feedback from their teachers about their capability to be successful in completing a task are most likely to develop the belief that they will be successful in completing such tasks. Physiological or affective states refer to the feelings or thinking of students as they participate in a learning task. For example, students who experience an increased heart rate or anxiety in the face of a task might interpret the feeling as a sign of incapability of being successful in that task, different from someone who experiences calmness that might be interpreted as a sign of competence. All of these sources influence students' self-efficacy in the ways they impact students' judgements about what they can do or not (Usher et al., 2023).

There is evidence of variation in ways and degrees in which these sources influence students' self-efficacy. For example, mastery experiences have been shown to wield the strongest influence on students' self-efficacy development because they involve students' direct experience of successful completion of a task (Butz & Usher, 2015). Huang et al. (2020) found that a combination of sources have more powerful influence. However, students tend to interpret these sources in different ways based on their social norms and cultural identity (Usher & Weidner, 2018), as well as their socialization contexts (Gebauer et al., 2021). For instance, in their study, Gebauer et al, (2021) measured the four sources of self-efficacy among students in different socialization contexts. They found that while mastery experience had the strongest influence on students with non-immigrant backgrounds, social persuasion was strongest for immigrant students. This finding draws attention to understanding how immigrant students' perceptions and interpretations of these sources might be different from those of non-immigrant students, and thus shape their academic self-efficacy development.

Overall, students' self-efficacy influences their effort, choices, and achievement (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Usher et al., 2023). When students believe they are capable of successfully

completing a task, they are motivated to engage in learning the task (Azila-Gbettor, 2021; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003).

Engagement defines students' participation or involvement in a learning activity. It is a multidimensional construct with distinct but related dimensions, such as behavioural, cognitive, and emotional (Fredricks et al., 2019). In this article, the term *engagement* refers mainly to behavioural engagement that captures students' overt involvement in the classroom, including effort, persistence, help seeking, and concentration. Engagement is critical in learning because it predicts students' positive outcomes, including achievement (Fredricks et al., 2019), and is influenced by self-efficacy (Ouweneel et al., 2013). For example, a student with specific task-positive motivational beliefs in reading will be more disposed to focus attention and spend extra time in reading class materials. Similarly, a student with high self-efficacy in solving math problems will concentrate more and persist in completing math homework even when it becomes challenging. On the contrary, students with low self-efficacy easily give in to self-doubt and give up in the face of learning difficulty.

## Who Is Frank?

Frank is a pseudonym for an international African student born in a family of educators. His parents and three siblings were teachers. One of his siblings was a high school math teacher. Growing up in a household that valued education, Frank was socialized into a culture that emphasizes learning as a viable tool for success in life. In his social context, there is often an expectation that children whose parents are teachers will excel academically, and probably become teachers themselves. As a collective society, his African culture emphasizes the value of collective responsibility in raising children, which is captured in the African proverb that "it takes a village to raise a child." It also highlights the importance of an extended family system, religion, hard work, and perseverance that inspire children to be resilient in the face of challenges. For example, his religious culture foregrounds the importance of praying during trial moments. One of the major goals of this article is to use Frank's case to highlight the powerful role of students' social and cultural contexts in their development of self-efficacy, which in turn influences their motivation to engage in learning activities.

## Development of Motivational Beliefs Across the School Years

This section describes Frank's experiences in relation to the development of his motivational beliefs, and how those beliefs shaped his engagement across his school years. Occasionally, attention is drawn to how his social and cultural contexts could be responsible for his developmental trajectory, and to the implications for educators.

### Elementary and Secondary School Education (Grades 1-12)

Frank started his elementary school education in his village. This community expected him to be intelligent and successful in academics, since his parents and some of his siblings were teachers. Presumably, responding to this social norm of a cultural and family belief system, his parents, who were both teachers, made sure that Frank and his siblings had a very structured program of studies at home. Frank received constant family support in completing school homework, especially in math which is his favourite subject. In the school, all of his teachers and peers would regularly call him "Nwa onye nkuzi," meaning "the son of the teacher," which re-echoes in him the societal expectations for great success. Although he loves school, these societal expectations (King et al., 2012), and family support (Gao et al., 2021; Simpkins et al., 2019), undoubtedly influenced the development of his high self-efficacy and learning engagement (Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Interestingly, building on this self-efficacy he exerted extra efforts toward his studies, constantly prayed for success, and experienced great success

in his elementary school. Frank's experience corroborates Wang and Degol's (2013) finding that multiple layers of context, including family, school, and larger society, influence the development of motivational beliefs. These beliefs are sustained when students feel supported (Wigfield et al., 2015). Frank's experience also aligns with the understanding of engagement and achievement as socially embedded in collectivist societies where people are motivated to be successful not only for personal interest but also for their family (Dekker & Fischer, 2008).

For his secondary school education (i.e., high school), Frank went to a top-rated missionary boarding school. This decision relates to his religious identity and affiliation. This institution, located in another town, has strict rules and regulations, emphasizing the role of prayer, morals and academics in human formation. Nevertheless, its emphasis on academic performance creates a competitive environment among top achieving students. Research has shown how a restricted environment (Eccles et al., 1993), social comparison and controlling classroom atmosphere (Eccles et al., 1984) are associated with a decline in students' motivational beliefs, especially from elementary to secondary school. In contrast, the competitive environment challenged and motivated Frank to pray and work harder to improve his learning and secure a better grade. For instance, based on his religious belief in the power of prayer in dealing with challenging situations, he made decisions to pray before studies and exams, and spent extra time in studies. Frank's case portrays how students can perceive a similar context differently (e.g., competitive environment), leading to different decisions. It also shows how students' religious beliefs might shape their motivational beliefs. Educators can better support students' development of self-efficacy beliefs if they understand how students' backgrounds influence their perception and interpretations of their learning contexts.

Frank has a specific domain interest in math. In his math class, praising students was an occasional occurrence in acknowledgement of an outstanding commitment to successfully solve math problems. This contextualized informative use of praise is associated with improvement of perceived self-efficacy (Ouweneel et al., 2013), and subsequent feedback seeking (Dimotakis et al., 2017). Receiving this positive feedback from his grade 8 math teacher (i.e., social persuasion) sustained and enhanced his self-efficacy belief, interest, motivation, and engagement in math (Butz & Usher, 2015; Ouweneel, et al., 2013; Peng, 2021). Later, the teacher, who happened to come from the same town as Frank, would always invite Frank to solve math problems on the board. He felt that this teacher not only believed in him but also had high expectations of him. To avoid letting his teacher down and maintain his self-concept as a "math kid," he developed a mastery orientation goal, that is, aiming to gain mastery and acquire new skills (Ames, 1992). Based on his mastery goal, he spent extra time working on math classes, and improved his math competence which sustained his self-efficacy. Consequently, the teacher encouraged his peers to seek support from him. Frank's mastery or past experience of successfully solving math problems, and his perceived teacher support and feedback (Rice et al., 2013), influenced his self-efficacy belief. Also, his perceived connection with the teacher (i.e., coming from the same town), teacher acknowledgment of his math capabilities which highlights the importance of teacher-student relationship (Liu, 2024), interest in math (Renninger & Hidi, 2020), and mastery goal (Huang, 2016) have contributed in a more complex way to his motivation and engagement (Harachiewicz et al., 2016), competence belief, and self-efficacy beliefs in math (Nuutila et al., 2020).

Although the teacher's feedback and high expectation motivated Frank, they demotivated a lot of his peers who felt disengaged. The peers' disengagement was associated with their perceived teacher's favouritism towards Frank, and lack of creating equitable opportunities for all students' learning (Anyichie, 2018, in press). Frank's interest and active engagement in solving math problems outside the classroom continued until grade 11. At this time, he had a math teacher whom he perceived to be less competent and with low expectation of the students, leading to his focusing on performance goal in math (i.e., emphasizing achievement to outperform others in order to maintain his math identity). He developed a negative feeling and thinking about solving math problems in this class (i.e., affective or physiological states). Thus,

he was demotivated and rarely worked on his math problems beyond class except during exam periods. However, due to his past experiences with math (i.e., mastery experience), he still believed in his capability to be successful during the exam. In grade 12, he had another math teacher who challenged the students with tasks within their zone of proximal development, that is, the "zone" between what they can do independently without help and what they cannot do without the help of more knowledgeable other, such as a teacher, peer or parent (Vygotsky, 1978). Frank's experiences with the grade 12 teacher increased his motivation to engage in solving math problems again after school. He ended up becoming one of the three best math students in his class during the final school certificate exams.

Frank's experience suggests how school context, inclusive of teachers' instructional practices and expectations, shape students' achievement goals that subsequently influence their motivational beliefs (e.g., self-efficacy) and engagement (Ames, 1992; Huang, 2016). It also confirms mastery or past experience as a stronger influence of self-efficacy in math (Butz & Usher, 2015). Additionally, it affirms how students' motivational beliefs, especially self-efficacy, engagement and achievement goals, are shaped by socio-cultural contexts. Some of these contextual factors are social goals of making one's family proud and meeting societal expectations (King et al., 2012), competitive school culture, and teacher classroom practices, including feedback (Dimotakis et al., 2017; Peng, 2021). Therefore, educators are invited to consider the impact of these factors in their classroom designs.

Students who feel supported by family, teachers, and friends have high motivational beliefs that impact the quality of their classroom engagement (Simpkins et al., 2020). For example, teachers can support students' awareness of their culturally shaped prior knowledge and academic experiences (e.g., through reflective assignments such as "know your self"), and build on those to design instructional practices that are personally meaningful to the students (Anyichie, in press; Anyichie et al., 2023). Educators can support students' motivational beliefs and learning engagement by helping them experience learning success by setting mastery goals (Huang, 2016), offering supports (Qiong et al., 2023; Rice et al., 2013; Wigfield et al., 2015), and holding high expectations of all students (Dekker & Fischer, 2008; Ladson-Billing, 2021).

**Undergraduate Program**

Frank started his undergraduate program at a Catholic missionary university in his home country. His past academic success through primary and secondary school reinforced his general self-efficacy beliefs while starting at this university. His professors, who were mainly trained overseas, emphasized critical thinking and hard work. However, Frank felt that there were too many courses and lectures with lesser personal connections between the professors and students, and too much emphasis on student grades and academic positions. As part of his extracurricular activities, Frank was assigned to the university clinic where he assisted the visiting doctors in attending to ill students. Occasionally, he missed lectures and study time due to the needs at the clinic. Over time, he experienced a decline in his academic achievement level. He started doubting his ability, which led to a decline in his self-efficacy and academic motivation (Kasimatis, et al., 1996; Schunk & Pajeres, 2009). However, since this university emphasizes the power of hard work and prayer, Frank did not give up on his studies. Instead, he spent some of the regularly scheduled morning meditation in the university to reflect on his learning experiences while praying for academic success.

Through constant meditations, Frank learned to focus more attention and increase his concentration level (e.g., by staying on task), and gained more learning insights and problem-solving strategies (e.g., by setting learning goals). Also, he became aware of how he had navigated similar challenges in middle school through teacher support and desire to meet social goals, including family expectations of success. His past experience (i.e., mastery experience) increased his self-efficacy to handle the current situation. This experience highlights how

educators can enhance students' self-efficacy by supporting their self-reflection and metacognitive awareness of how they successfully completed a challenging task or overcame a related difficulty situation in the past (Usher et al., 2023).

Moving forward, Frank interpreted his grades as a pointer to his current level of academic achievement, which is different from his ability and intelligence. He could tell that his prior academic motivation and success had been largely dependent on external factors (i.e., extrinsic motivation), including high expectations from family, friends, teachers and peers. The absence of some of these external motivators, together with the university academic structure (e.g., less connection with the professors, more emphasis on grade and academic positions), limited his opportunities to access help and affected his motivation and engagement. However, he internalized these extrinsic motivational factors, that is, autonomous extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020), by savouring the intrinsic satisfaction of meeting these expectations. Thus, Frank autonomously engaged in his learning processes by spending a good amount of time developing his learning strategies (e.g., exerting efforts and spending extra time in learning new ideas, reading self-development books), regulating his learning (e.g., monitoring his learning progress), and seeking help from professor and students (e.g., clarifying ideas about assignments). With time, he developed a stronger growth mindset, that is, belief in the malleability of ability and effort (Dweck, 1999; Dweck & Yeager, 2021) which motivated his learning engagement (Rhew et al., 2018) towards achieving success.

Again, Frank's experiences relate to research findings about the role of social goals such as making family proud (King et al., 2012) and teacher supports in navigating classroom challenges (Anyichie, 2018; Liu, 2024; Qiong et al., 2023), fostering motivation and engagement (Simpkins, et al., 2020), and growth mindset (Dweck, 1999; Rhew et al., 2018). It also relates to how self-efficacy and autonomous motivation enhance engagement (Azila-Gbettor et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2020). His internalization of socially oriented goals (e.g., making the family proud) supports Vygotsky (1978)'s view of the social origin of psychological processes, including the regulation of learning.

Educators can support students' motivational beliefs (e.g., self-efficacy), and academic engagement through fostering students' self-regulation skills by involving them in setting realistic goals, controlling the level of their academic challenge, and self-assessing and monitoring their learning (Panadero et al., 2017; Saks, 2024). Students could be assisted to develop a growth mindset by emphasizing the effort required to achieve success (Dweck, 1999; Dweck & Yeager, 2021; Rhew et al., 2018). Additionally, students' self-efficacy could be enhanced by developing a good relationship with them (Liu, 2024) through spending time with them to know more about their lives outside of school, providing opportunities for success through designing challenging activities that still allows students to experience success (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003), and helping them see their academic progress (Usher et al., 2023).

Therefore, attention should be paid to how students' socio-cultural contexts (i.e., external environments), including culture, religious beliefs, values, social norms and expectations, might be shaping their motivational belief system and learning engagement. As seen in Frank's case, his societal and family expectations (e.g., to be intelligent because of being a child of educators, making the family proud), religious beliefs (e.g., the power of prayer in facing challenges, achieving success) all came together in informing his judgement about his capability and motivation in achieving success even in challenging situations.

### Graduate and Postgraduate Programs

After his undergraduate program, Frank completed two different graduate programs at a public university in his home country. At this time, he developed a strong interest in pursuing a Ph.D. program, which was primarily born out of his aspiration to become a university professor. His desire for an academic career is connected to his being raised in a family of educators.

However, during his graduate programs, he encountered many locally trained professors whom he perceived as lacking commitment and competence (Anyichie, 2023), which contributed to his desire for international training. Thus, he applied for Ph.D. programs in different top universities in Europe and North America.

During his Ph.D. applications, he was faced with the hurdle of completing the General Record Examination (GRE) required by some North American universities. GRE assesses students' critical thinking, quantitative and verbal reasoning, and analytical writing skills. Peers who had taken the exam shared with Frank their difficulty passing it. Since this exam was congruent with his future identity, that is, becoming a professor, Frank interpreted the difficulty as important and necessary (Oyserman & Horowitz, 2023). Similarly, connecting the expectations of this exam to his prior knowledge of critical thinking in his undergraduate logic class, quantitative reasoning and interest in math during his high school, Frank developed high self-efficacy to do well in this exam. Building on his attribution of his past success to prayer and hard work, he studied and prayed hard to pass this examination. These decisions confirm how students' current and future identity (Oyserman & Horowitz, 2023), prior knowledge, and past experiences shape their self-efficacy and choices (Usher et al., 2023).

As a self-regulated learner, Frank exercised control over his thoughts (e.g., by convincing himself that he would be successful in the exam), emotions (e.g., by appreciating the positive feelings of past success), actions (e.g., by seeking the help of a math tutor), and learning behaviour (e.g., by spending extra hours reviewing GRE preparatory texts), in order to navigate the challenges of GRE, and he achieved his goal of studying abroad (Zimmerman, 2008). These motivational beliefs evident in his self-efficacy informed his engagement in self-regulatory behaviours of developing effective and adaptive strategies to pass the GRE examination, including hiring a tutor (Schunk & Pajeres, 2003).

Frank's experience in preparing for his Ph.D. application abroad confirms Bandura's (1977) hypothesis that higher self-efficacy entails choosing challenging activities, exerting more effort towards success, and persisting longer on difficult tasks. Frank's motivational beliefs also connected to his personal interest (e.g., math) and achievement goal (e.g., passing the exam, studying abroad). Thus, he devoted the time and energy judged sufficient to achieve his goal while believing that effort is unstable and controllable (Graham, & Williams, 2009). Frank's case aligns with research findings that highlight the context-dependent nature of motivation, engagement (Anyichie, et al., 2023; Nolen et al., 2015), and self-efficacy (Mitchell, et al., 2021; Usher et al., 2023), and how they cannot be fully understood outside the context wherein they occur. To illustrate, Anyichie (2018, in press) documented evidence of how students' perception of task values, including whether the learning activities were judged relevant, important, interesting, and enjoyable, explained the variations in their level of motivation and engagement across days. Students' development of motivational beliefs, such as self-efficacy, could be enhanced when educators support mastery goals in their classes (Huang, 2016), connect classroom learning activities to students' interests (Nuutila et al., 2020; Renniger & Hidi, 2020) and lived experiences, or assist them to make those connections themselves (Anyichie, 2018, in press; Anyichie et al., 2023).

Interestingly, Frank's efforts were rewarded with multiple admissions and scholarships to different universities. He attributed this performance outcome to his effort and prayers that strengthened his competence belief, self-efficacy, and motivation for higher success. As an international student, he opted for the university that offered him a full scholarship. While in the Ph.D. program, he received much positive feedback from his professors who had high expectations of him and expressed belief in his potential to be successful. For example, the supervisor supported his ambitious research interest and agenda while constantly communicating high confidence and belief in his capability to succeed. Frank's interactions with the supervisor, who created multiple opportunities for him to drive his research agenda (e.g., setting both long-term and short-term goals about completing his studies), increased his sense of ownership of his learning processes. The feedback from his professors (i.e., social

persuasions) positively impacted his self-efficacy (Usher et al., 2023). His perceived social support (Liu, 2024), high expectations of the professors (Ladson-Billings, 2021), and sense of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2020) motivated him to invest a lot of energy engaging in all of the learning opportunities that were available in his program (Liu, 2024; Simkins et al., 2020). It is noteworthy to remark that this case study was inspired by a class assignment during Frank's Ph.D. program, which asked students to appraise their motivational beliefs. Most of Frank's decisions while in his Ph.D. program were influenced by his identity and experiences as an African international student. His attribution of all his past success to effort and prayer, including meditations, led to the development of his academic motto "hard work and prayer equals to success" (H + P = S).

Finally, educators can support students' development and awareness of their motivational beliefs, which in turn increase their self-efficacy, motivation, and engagement by fostering constant reflection and monitoring of their learning experiences (Panadero et al., 2017), encouraging their goal setting (Saks, 2024), offering honest constructive feedback (Dimotakis et al., 2017; Hattie & Timperley, 2007), maintaining high expectations of all the students (Ladson-Billings, 2021), creating opportunities such as choice provision to support their autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2020), and connecting class activities to students' backgrounds by using their daily life experiences as examples in the class teaching and/or encouraging them to make those connections by working on interesting tasks that are personally meaningful to their experiences and aspirations (Anyichie, 2018, in press; Anyichie et al., 2023).

## Conclusions and Implications

Research has shown that students' motivational beliefs, including self-efficacy, predict their engagement and achievement (Liou et al., 2021). Less research has considered the impact of social and cultural contexts on students' development of motivational beliefs and engagement. This reflective article demonstrates how an African student's socio-cultural beliefs, values, and aspirations influenced his development of motivational beliefs, especially self-efficacy, and how those beliefs shaped his motivation and engagement in school. Frank's case study highlights how motivational beliefs are situated in context and can vary over the school years and across subject areas. The outcome of this article has some implications for theory, classroom practice, and research.

First, it adds to self-efficacy belief theory by drawing attention to how the socio-cultural contexts of non-western students might be influencing their development of motivational beliefs different from western students. Second, consistent with prior studies, it recommends that educators can support students' self-efficacy beliefs, motivation, and engagement by holding high expectations for all students, providing challenging tasks that are not beyond the students' ability, fostering students' self-reflection, enhancing their growth mindset, supporting their autonomy, building trusting relationships, offering honest constructive feedback, supporting students' specific academic domain interests, and making meaningful connections between classroom activities and students' lives. Third, it adds to the literature on self-efficacy by highlighting the dynamic interplay between Frank and multiple different layers of contexts, and the need for more cultural and in-situ approaches to understanding students' self-efficacy, motivation, and engagement. Therefore, educators must understand their students' background (e.g., their cultural and religious beliefs, societal norms and expectations, values and aspirations) and how those influence the students' motivational beliefs, in order to better provide multiple efficacy-supportive opportunities. Finally, future empirical research is needed to investigate how motivational beliefs of non-western students, especially of African descent, evolve over time during their school years. Longitudinal studies will be helpful in uncovering how different factors, including social and cultural expectations (e.g., society, family), school contexts (e.g., teacher practices, peers), and religious beliefs (e.g., the power of prayer in overcoming challenges and achieving success), influence students' motivational beliefs such as self-

efficacy, and in turn shape students' motivation and engagement. Cross-cultural research will be beneficial in revealing what is universal and what is unique to specific cultures, individual differences, and contextual factors in the development of motivational beliefs.

It is hoped that this article will trigger more interests among educators and researchers to design learning environments and research based on the understanding that students' socio-cultural contexts influence the development of their motivational beliefs (e.g., self-efficacy), in turn impacting their motivation and learning engagement.

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