ENHANCING TEACHERS SELF-EFFICACY : THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

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Abstract

Self-efficacy construct represents a viable organizing concept for the development of new and better professional development models. Self-efficacy is a central feature of social learning theory and its role as a potent intervening factor between learning and subsequent performance has been established by research in a number of contexts, including teacher development. Also self-efficacy construct can provide schools and staff development specialists with the tools they need to design effective teacher trainings, improve teacher competences and as a consequence enhance students outcomes. The purpose of this paper is to give a theoretical analysis to the enhancement of teachers self- efficacy. This study examines different theories on teacher self-efficacy and also gives an overview of what kind of measurements should be taken to enhance teachers self- efficacy.

Keywords: Teacher, enhance, self –efficacy, students, training programme

Introduction

In recent years, there have been discussions about the need to improve teachers' pedagogical thinking and skills as well. As a consequence, training teachers has recently become a widespread trend in many countries. Evidence of the impact of training on teaching is needed to guide educational development units to design their courses since earlier research in this field is rather descriptive than evaluative (Gilbert & Gibbs, 1999). Research has enabled us to better understand the factors that influ-ence teachers' practices in relation to issues of classroom management. Teacher preparation and their sense of efficacy are influential in the process of building a harmonious classroom dynamic.

Teacher self-efficacy

The concept of self efficacy is grounded in the framework of social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the evolvement and exercise of human agency (Bandura, 2006). Bandura (1977) first introduced the cognitive social learning theory, which examines the human capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of ones'life (Bandura, 2001)through intentional actions. Bandura further defines self efficacy as judging one's ability to produce desired results and forestall detrimental ones (Bandura, 2001).

Bandura (1997) stated that people's conceptions of their self efficacy, regardless accurate or misjudged, are developed through four sources of influence which he termed as (1) mastery experience (2) vicarious experience (3) verbal or social persuasion and (4) physiological arousal or emotional state. The first, and most effective, is through "mastery experiences", or successes tasks (1994). Mastrey experiences increase one's self- efficacy, while failures may inhibt its development. Bandura (1977, 1997) identified vicarious experience as the second- most potent influence on ones's sense of efficacy.

Hoy (2000) also mentioned that teacher self efficacy is teachers' confidence in the ability to promote student learning. The idea that teachers self beliefs are determinants of teaching behavior is simple, yet powerful idea (Henson, 2001). Teacher self efficacy plays a role not only in student success but teacher success as well. Hoy (2000) presented other factors that influence a teacher's sense of efficacy. First, vicarious experiences play a role (it includes observing another teacher's practice). Secondly, social persuasion plays a role (continuous feedback).

According to Hoy, Hoy, and Davis (2009), "greater efficacy leads to greater effort and persistence , which leads to better performance, which in turn leads to greater efficacy".

Losee (2000) summarized: The value of Self-efficacy Theory is realized from the guidelines that people can influence their own lives and enhance human efficacy. She states that selfefficacy can be learned and it should be facilitated by the school leaders. The ingredients for self-efficacy that school leaders must develop fall into three categories of skills: Focus, Flow and Follow-through. These three skills enable aikido masters to blend with the energies within and around them. School leaders must be ready for transformation and change. In the quickly changing world around us, it is imperative we not only develop and teach skills but that our focus is on self-efficacy for all people within the school organization, leaders, staff and students. Self-efficacy can be the catalyst to an explosion of empowerment and be the tool to create more than mere students, teachers or leaders but greatness.

Enhancing teacher self-efficacy through training programmes

Given the current and potential educational value of the teacher efficacy construct, efforts to impact changes in teacher efficacy would be valuable in moving teacher efficacy research beyond the realm of correlational designs (Henson,2001b). The opportunity for teachers to critically examine themselves, reflect on their beliefs and receive feedback concerning their effectiveness will assist in solidifying self-efficacy that will promote learning and retention. But, research shows that these opportunities must be conducted early on in their careers because as a teacher moves through his or her career, the teachers' efficacy beliefs set in and are more challenging to redesign.

Researchers have documented changes in the efficacy beliefs of teachers at various stages in their professional careers. Much work has shown that efficacy beliefs are highest in preservice teachers, and that these teachers' sense of efficacy drops, often drastically, during the first year of teaching (Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988; Soodak & Podell, 1997). For example, in their cross-sectional sample of elementary and secondary preservice and practicing teachers, Soodak and Podell (1997) found that elementary teachers' personal efficacy beliefs showed a considerable decline from preservice experiences to the first year of teaching. These researchers also found a consistent increase in elementary teachers' efficacy beliefs with experience, yet this increase never reached preservice levels. Moreover, Soodak and Podell (1997) found no evidence of a fluctuation of efficacy beliefs in secondary teachers. In fact, these researchers reported that their sample of secondary teachers was significantly more homogeneous in their efficacy beliefs than the sample of elementary teachers.

Chester and Beaudin (1996) investigated the relationship between changes in self-efficacy beliefs and school organizational factors for newly hired teachers in urban schools, finding that the typically reported decline in efficacy beliefs over the first year of teaching is not universal. Specifically, they found this relationship to be mediated by certain school- level organizational factors—opportunities for collaboration with other teachers and administrators, supervisor attention to classroom performance, and availability of instructional resource.

Researchers examining the development of efficacy beliefs have highlighted that these beliefs are most flexible during pre-service training (Housego, 1992; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993, Woolfolk Hoy & Burke-Spero, 2005), and progressively more resistant to change with experience (Anderson et al., 1988; Ohmart, 1992; Ross, 1994; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Teachers with the least amount of experience also tend to report low self-efficacy with regard to managing difficult classroom behaviours (Carter, Cushing, Sabers, Stein & Berliner, 1988). Further, teachers who

work alone, who do not participate in decisions, and who are not solicited to collaborate with their peers are most likely to have a low general teaching efficacy, even if they possess a strong personal teaching efficacy (Beady & Hansell, 1981; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993).

Some research points to the importance of directly addressing the notion of efficacy beliefs in in-service teacher training programs (Ohlhausen, Meyerson, & Sexton, 1992; Stein & Wang, 1988) to have a positive impact on classroom management. This component is all the more important for the groups of teachers who are the most resistant to modifying how they manage their classrooms as they are also less inclined to pursue professional development activities and to collaborate with their colleagues (Raver et al., 2008).

Henson (2001b) states, "positively impacting teachers' efficacy beliefs is unlikely outside of longer term professional development that compels teachers to think critically about their classrooms and behave actively in instructional improvement" (p.8). The development of teacher self-efficacy is significant; there are a number of factors that contribute to teacher self-efficacy and there are a number of components that self-efficacy influences.

Once in service, teachers have the possibility of continuing their training by participating in personal development activities and seminars or by pursuing graduate studies. Researchers have demonstrated that in-service training can have a positive impact on both teaching practices (Behnke, 2006; Evertson, 1989; Raver et al., 2008; Roelofs, Veeman, & Raemaekers, 1994; Veenman, Lem, & Roelofs, 1989) and efficacy beliefs (Lewis, 2001; Ross & Bruce, 2007).

Coffey's and Gibbs (2000) study revealed that teachers in universities in UK, showed significant improvements in scores measuring learning, enthusiasm, organization and rapport measured by the Student Evaluation of Educational Quality questionnaire, after one semester of two and three semester long training programmes. Using the Approaches to Teaching Inventory (ATI; Prosser & Tringwell, 1999) in 22 universities in eight countries, Gibbs and Goffey (2004) studied effectiveness of university teachers' training. A training group of teachers and their students were studied at the beginning of their training, and 1 year later. The training group became less teacher-centered and more student centered by the end of 4-18 months training. In addition, their teaching skills improved significantly after the training as judged by students (measured by SEEQ and the "Good teaching"scale of the Module Experience Questionnaire MEQ).Their students took a deep approach to learning, to greater extent, after their teachers had been trained, although this change was small. However, this study suffered from several drop-outs, and the authors point out that they are

not in a position to demonstrate whether it was the training itself that resulted in the positive changes.

Another study of Liisa Postareff et al (2007) reported the impact of university teachers' pedagogical training on approaches to teaching and self-efficacy beliefs. The results indicated that pedagogical training had an effect on scales measuring conceptual change/ student focused approach and self-efficacy beliefs. Even when the effect of teaching experience was held constant, in order to find out the unique effect of pedagogical training, the results remained the same. In addition, teachers mentioned only positive effects of pedagogical training on teaching.

Despite these studies Norton et al. (2005) consider the effect of teacher' training in higher education questionable. They note that there is only little evidence to show that the training would have an effect on teaching behavior. They made a study of university teachers in the UK, using a questionnaire measuring different aspects of teachers' beliefs and intentions, concerning teaching in higher education. Fifty teachers had taken a programme on teaching and learning in higher education and the other group of 72 teachers had no training. They found that there were no significant differences between the two groups on scales measuring teaching beliefs and intentions. These results suggest that genuine development will come about and only by addressing teachers' underlying conceptions of teaching and learning.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to give a theoretical analysis to the enhancement of teachers self- efficacy. This study examined different theories on teacher self-efficacy and also gave an overview of what kind of measurements should be taken to enhance teachers self- efficacy. Research on the subject confirms that general and personal efficacy beliefs of educators are most malleable during preservice training and tend to remain stable (Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2005).

Moreover, several studies have shown the positive effects of professional development on educational practices (Behnke, 2006; Evertson, 1989; Jones, 1991; Raver et al., 2008; Roelofs et al., 1994). However, few teacher training programs place any emphasis on the development of strong efficacy beliefs despite the knowledge that they often influence teaching practices. This study highlighted the beneficial effects of trainings programms adapted to the needs of teachers by taking into account the sources that influence their self-efficacy.

The education practices of teachers have a very real impact on how these students will react in the future. It is therefore crucial that these teachers be adequately trained to be effective in their interventions. It is

crucial to establish in-service training programs that develop high self-efficacy attitudes in classroom, as these programs will guide teachers to seek out effective edu-cation practices that not only directly address the needs of their students but also help to reduce their own stress level. The more teachers believe in their ability to work with their students and to lead them on the path to success, the more open they will be to teaching their students.

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