



Elementary and secondary teacher self-efficacy for teaching and pedagogical conceptual change in a drama-based professional development program

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H I G H L I G H T S

- ▶ Elementary teachers have higher self-efficacy for teaching than secondary teachers.
- ▶ Elementary teachers have higher pedagogical conceptual change than secondary.
- ▶ Self-efficacy is not predictive of pedagogical conceptual change.
- ▶ Grade level taught moderates the effects of years teaching on self-efficacy.

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This mixed-methods research study explores the potential relationship between the teacher self-efficacy and pedagogical conceptual change. The study context was a drama-based instruction professional development model that specifically sought to facilitate pedagogical conceptual change. Significant differences were present between elementary and secondary teachers in self-efficacy for teaching and in pedagogical conceptual change. However, self-efficacy did not predict conceptual change. The independent variable (elementary and secondary teachers) was a significant moderator between years teaching experience and self-efficacy. We discuss the significance of these findings in light of teacher training and teacher effectiveness.

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1. Introduction

Of the many malleable factors in education that can positively impact student academic outcomes, teachers and their teaching are among the most important. Interventions to improve student success often focus on changes in a teacher's instructional practice, adaption of a new curriculum, or implementation of new strategies and assessment tools. Yet a teacher's contribution to student learning goes beyond the content of their instruction or their level of training. Teachers' perspectives and perceptions of their own teaching, and by extension, of their students' learning, are an integral part of successful teaching practice.

For the last thirty years, many researchers have studied teacher self-efficacy for teaching—an educator's beliefs about his or her

capability to teach and affect student outcomes (Bandura, 1986). Despite differences in educational settings and systems, research suggests that this teacher belief is present in multiple cultures and countries (Klassen et al., 2009; Scholz, Doña, Sud, & Schwarzer, 2002). In addition, numerous empirical studies have suggested a positive effect of high teacher self-efficacy on student achievement outcomes (Armor et al., 1976; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Ertmer, 2005; Roberts, Henson, Tharp, & Morena, 2001; Rosenshine, 1979; Ross, 1992; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; among others). In short, when teachers have confidence in their ability to improve student learning, they are in fact better at doing so.

However, teacher self-efficacy has proven to be a complex construct that varies throughout a teacher's career and interacts with a teacher's pedagogical practice (Alger, 2009; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). A particular challenge in identifying the impact of teacher self-efficacy on student outcomes is understanding (a) how self-efficacy may affect other changes in teacher behavior, and (b) what other teacher characteristics may influence teacher self-

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efficacy. More specifically, efficacious teachers may be better able to change their teaching approach in order to accommodate student needs. In other words, a teacher's high level of self-efficacy may facilitate a teacher's openness to new ideas about teaching and the ability to undergo and act upon a pedagogical conceptual change. Consequently, professional development providers and teacher educators should address the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and pedagogical conceptual change as they develop curriculum and/or instructional interventions. If a teacher's pedagogy needs to change in order to incorporate new evidence-based practices, then an essential key to facilitating this change may be raising a teacher's self-efficacy.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential relationship between teacher self-efficacy and pedagogical conceptual change. The guiding question was as follows: What is the relationship between a teacher's self-efficacy for teaching and their openness and/or ability to implement new instructional strategies in the classroom? In this article, we first define and explore the two theoretical constructs. Next, we describe the study context in greater depth, providing examples of ways in which the structure of the professional development model and the focus on drama-based instruction together sought to facilitate pedagogical conceptual change. We then present both quantitative and qualitative findings from the study, including teacher demographics, self-efficacy scores, and measures of pedagogical conceptual change over the course of the professional development experience. We discuss the significance of these findings in light of teacher training, teacher effectiveness, and the use of teacher efficacy as a construct for in-service teacher research.

2. Theoretical frameworks

2.1. *Teacher self-efficacy*

As stated earlier, teacher self-efficacy is an educator's belief about his or her capability to teach and affect student outcomes (Bandura, 1986). Teacher self-efficacy appears to be a stable underlying construct throughout various contexts. In addition, research has shown that high teacher self-efficacy positively affects student academic outcomes.

Within educational research, measuring teacher self-efficacy has shifted throughout the last thirty years. In initial studies, the construct was measured by asking teachers to respond to two statements (Rosenshine, 1979) which produced a general idea of how teachers thought they and their colleagues could have an impact on student learning. This early research suggested that teacher self-efficacy was one of the few *teacher* characteristics to have a significant influence on student achievement (Armor et al., 1976; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Rosenshine, 1979). For the next two decades of research, researchers developed and used an expanded measurement that included 20 statements about the teacher's perceived effects of the effort to help her students. This new instrument drew a more direct link between beliefs about one's capacity to teach effectively and the effects of their teaching practice (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Results of this research suggested that teacher self-efficacy influences a constellation of student outcomes related to achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross, 1992), student beliefs (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989) and student motivation (Dembo & Gibson, 1985), among others.

More recently, work by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy has established the conceptualization and measurement of teacher self-efficacy in even further depth. Their widely used and validated measure of self-efficacy, *Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale*

(TSES), examines three subfactors: 1) efficacy for instructional strategies, 2) efficacy for classroom management, and 3) efficacy for student engagement (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). These subscale divisions acknowledge that teaching has multiple components that are meaningful in a teacher's perception of effectiveness, and that a teacher's efficacy can vary between them. Findings from studies using this framework further support the positive effects of teacher self-efficacy on various teacher and student outcomes in multiple countries and contexts (e.g., Bryant, 2007; Caprara et al., 2006; Lumpe, Czerniak, Haney, & Beltyukova, 2012; Shidler, 2009; Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan, & Quek, 2008).

If research repeatedly suggests that highly efficacious teachers produce stronger student outcomes, what do these teachers do in their classrooms that may be different than teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy? Woolfolk, Rosoff, and Hoy (1990) found that teachers with high self-efficacy were more supportive of a student's autonomy in learning, had well-managed classrooms, believed in their ability to make an impact on the students, and gave few extrinsic rewards (e.g., stars for good behavior), relying instead on intrinsic motivation in their students to support good behavior. More current research suggests that high self-efficacy is also related to a teacher's greater effort and persistence when working with students (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000) and their ability to handle stress in the classroom (Chan, 2002). In sum, efficacious teachers have high expectations for their students and are effective in facilitating ways for their students to meet those expectations.

Teacher efficacy is a construct that should be accessible to teachers across a range of settings and subject areas. On the strength of literature supporting the positive relationship between teacher efficacy and student outcomes, building teacher efficacy has been a focus of teacher preparation programs (for pre-service teachers) and professional development (for in-service teachers). Raising a teacher's self-efficacy is now a desired outcome of professional development, one that is complementary to what is traditionally the primary focus in teacher training, deepening content knowledge (Ertmer, 2005; Roberts et al., 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). However, in a desire to create an intervention to increase teacher effectiveness with valid measures of these outcomes, "self-efficacy" persists as a somewhat vague and elusive construct (Klassen et al., 2011; Pajares, 1992; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). One way to better develop the field's understanding of self-efficacy is to look at how self-efficacy may or may not predict a teacher's ability to make changes to her pedagogy, particularly in the context of explicit training and professional development. In other words, does a teacher's level of self-efficacy predict a teacher's openness and/or ability to undergo a pedagogical conceptual change?

2.2. *Pedagogical conceptual change through professional development*

Pedagogical conceptual change (also referred to as accommodative change in Hashweh, 2009 or pedagogical change in Maskit, 2011) employs the conceptual change framework from the field of cognitive psychology and applies it to a teacher's conceptions about teaching (Thorley & Stofflett, 1996). In general, conceptual change is defined as "the alteration of conceptions that are in some way central and organizing in thought and learning" (Strike & Posner, 1992, p. 148). More specifically then, when a teacher experiences a pedagogical conceptual change, *a shift occurs in his or her underlying conceptions about teaching that in turn affects their teaching practice*. Pedagogical conceptual change focuses on translating new ideas about teaching into

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