



## Exploring literacy teachers' self-efficacy beliefs: Potential sources at play

Megan Tschannen-Moran\*, Denise Johnson

College of William and Mary, School of Education, PO Box 8795, Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795, United States

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 27 March 2010

Received in revised form

4 December 2010

Accepted 7 December 2010

#### Keywords:

Teacher self-efficacy

Literacy instruction

Antecedents

Contextual factors

### ABSTRACT

This study explored the antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs for literacy instruction and the relationship of these beliefs to self-efficacy for teaching in general. Factor analysis demonstrated construct validity of the measure of TSEL developed. Moderate correlations between TSEL and the more general TSES suggest that while there is some overlap, they are not the same thing. In a regression analysis, the quality of university preparation, highest level of education, participation in a book club, school level, resources available for classroom books, teachers' sense of efficacy for instructional strategies and for student engagement all explain variance in TSEL.

© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

The study of teachers' sense of efficacy began in the mid 1970s with the RAND studies of reading instruction among low-income and minority students in an urban setting (Armor et al., 1976). The RAND researchers, in search of variables that would explain differences in the effectiveness of certain teachers and methods, examined the extent to which teachers believed that they could control the reinforcement of their actions. They assessed the extent to which teachers believed they could control student motivation and performance and whether teachers believed environmental factors overwhelmed any power they could exert in schools. The researchers found that teacher self-efficacy was positively related to variations in reading achievement among minority students. Students taught by teachers who believed that they could significantly influence students' motivation and learning tended to have higher reading achievement than students whose teachers believed that there was little they could do in light of the impediments to learning posed by the environment.

The results of the RAND studies piqued interest in the construct of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and over the last three decades researchers have sought to expand and refine the notion of teacher self-efficacy and how it is measured. Teachers' sense of efficacy has proved to be a powerful construct, related to teachers' motivation and behavior in the classroom as well as contributing to important student outcomes (Ross, 1998; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Research has examined the effects of efficacy beliefs on teaching and learning in general as well as in selected subject areas. Yet, little research into teachers' self-efficacy beliefs for literacy

instruction has been published since the RAND study. Moreover, there is little empirical evidence about how to cultivate stronger self-efficacy beliefs for literacy instruction. The purpose of this study was to explore potential antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs in the realm of literacy instruction and the relationship of these beliefs to self-efficacy for teaching in general.

### 1. The development of self-efficacy beliefs

Bandura (1977) introduced the concept of self-efficacy beliefs as an assessment of one's capabilities to attain a desired level of performance in a given endeavor. He proposed that belief in one's abilities was a powerful drive influencing one's motivation to act, the effort one puts forth in the endeavor, the persistence of that effort, and resilience in the face of setbacks. Bandura (1997) asserted that these beliefs were more powerful than one's actual abilities for the task at hand in influencing people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions (p. 2). Consequently, a teacher who did not expect to be successful in literacy instruction for certain students would likely put forth less effort in the preparation and delivery of instruction and would likely give up more readily as the students struggled, even if he or she actually possessed teaching strategies that would likely assist these students if they were applied. Self-efficacy beliefs can therefore become self-fulfilling prophecies, validating either beliefs of capability or of incompetence.

#### 1.1. Sources of self-efficacy

Bandura (1997) proposed four major influences on self-efficacy beliefs – vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, physiological

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 757 221 2187; fax: +1 757 221 2988.

E-mail addresses: [mxtsch@wm.edu](mailto:mxtsch@wm.edu) (M. Tschannen-Moran), [cdjohn@wm.edu](mailto:cdjohn@wm.edu) (D. Johnson).

arousal, and mastery experiences. Vicarious experiences are those in which the target activity, such as teaching a particular subject or group of students, is modeled by someone else. Verbal persuasion has to do with verbal interactions that a teacher receives about his or her performance and prospects for success. Psychological and emotional arousal also adds to a feeling of capability or incompetence, depending upon whether it is experienced as a sense of anxiety or of excitement about a performance. The most powerful source of efficacy-relevant information for literacy teachers is mastery experiences or actual teaching accomplishments with students. Self-efficacy beliefs are raised when a teacher witnesses improvement in student performances as a result of her or his teaching, which then contributes to optimism that future performances likewise will be proficient. This increase in self-efficacy results in greater effort and persistence over time. Repeated failures, on the other hand, lower self-efficacy beliefs resulting in decreased motivation and resilience (Guskey, 1988; Ross, 1998; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Researchers have tried to document the influence of these various sources of self-efficacy. In a study in Hong Kong, prospective teachers' beliefs about their capability were found to be influenced by the quality of supervision they received (verbal persuasion) as well as experiences during practice teaching (mastery experiences) (Yeung & Watkins, 2000). In a study of prospective teachers in the US, it was found that vicarious experiences in the form of modeling by the teacher educator and master teachers positively influenced pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for effective literacy instruction (Johnson, 2010). Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) tested four different models of professional development in the introduction of a pedagogical strategy to assist beginning readers to bridge the gap between sounds and letter symbols through the use of hand cues. The four models were each considered to provide increasingly rich sources of self-efficacy, starting with verbal persuasion (telling alone), then the addition of vicarious experiences (telling plus modeling), to the introduction of a limited mastery experience (practice with colleagues), and finally to a full mastery experience (coaching in the teachers' own classrooms). The model that included a full mastery experience showed the largest gains in self-efficacy beliefs. This study demonstrated that the development of self-efficacy beliefs is not a linear progression with new sources of self-efficacy adding to incremental gains in self-efficacy.

## 1.2. The role of context

The context in which the sources of efficacy are experienced also plays an important role in the development of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. In assessing their beliefs about their teaching capability, it has been proposed that teachers make two interrelated judgments: an assessment of their personal teaching competence *in light of* the assumed requirements of an anticipated teaching task (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Judgments of personal competence are those a teacher makes about his or her capabilities based on an assessment of internal strengths and deficits. The assessment of the teaching task may include the instructional resources available as well as the quality of the curriculum; student factors such as their perceived ability, motivation, and socioeconomic status; and contextual factors such as school climate, collegial support, and leadership. Support for this theory was found in a study conducted in Singapore. Teachers in high-track middle schools were found to be have stronger self-efficacy beliefs compared to their fellow teachers who taught in regular schools where there was a greater range of student ability groupings (Chong, Klassen, Huan, Wong, & Kates, 2010). Furthermore, teachers' beliefs about their ability to meet the challenge of teaching high-track students were shaped in

part by the attitudes of other teachers, the availability of specific resources, as well as organizational expectations and goals.

Career stage seems to influence the role played by contextual variables that matter as sources of self-efficacy. Contextual factors such as the availability of teaching resources were found to contribute more to the self-efficacy beliefs of novice teachers than career teachers who had a wealth of mastery experiences on which to base their self-perceptions (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Verbal persuasion, assessed as the interpersonal support of administrators, colleagues, parents, and members of the community, made significant contributions to explaining variance in novice teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, but made little contribution for career teachers. Bandura (1997) asserted that self-efficacy beliefs are most in flux early in learning and tend to become fairly stable and resistant to change once set. For novice teachers, who have few mastery experiences to draw upon, other sources of self-efficacy seem to be more salient in their self-assessments of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

While there is a large and growing body of literature on the effects of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, little is known about the effects of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in the complex realm of literacy instruction and the antecedents of these beliefs.

## 1.3. Self-efficacy and literacy instruction

Effective literacy instruction requires teachers to make complex and instantaneous teaching decisions to meet the diverse needs of their students (Block & Mangieri, 2003; Pinnell, 2002). Many teachers view teaching students with a wide range of reading levels as one of the greatest challenges that they face (Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, & Moon, 2000). Effective action depends, in part, on one's perceived self-efficacy that the knowledge and skills needed to perform the task can be mobilized successfully under varied and unpredictable circumstances. In a situation where a teacher is attempting to enact a particular instructional strategy with a group of students who are struggling to decode or comprehend a text, for example, a teacher with a high sense of efficacy would be more likely to try different instructional approaches, texts, or grouping strategies until the students are successful (Allinder, 1994; Guskey, 1988). A teacher with low self-efficacy is more likely to blame or criticize the students for their lack of success, to persist with ineffective instruction, to give up on the students, or to refer the students to special education (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Meijer & Foster, 1988; Podell & Soodak, 1993; Soodak & Podell, 1993).

Research on the impact of self-efficacy beliefs on literacy instruction is quite limited, however the studies that have been done provide promising evidence that self-efficacy beliefs matter in the realm of literacy instruction. In a study of teachers working with disadvantaged students in New Zealand, Timperley and Phillips (2003) found generally low expectations and a low level of self-efficacy at the beginning of their work with the teachers. After a six-month intervention in which teachers learned new and more powerful literacy teaching strategies and witnessed improved student outcomes as a result, their self-efficacy beliefs were found to have risen significantly. The teachers' expectations of both themselves and their students increased in spite of their students' disadvantaged backgrounds. In another study, it was found that the type of training in reading instruction that pre-service teachers received based on the type of preparation program they attended influenced their teaching in terms of differences in understandings, beliefs, and decision making. Beginning teachers who graduated from reading specialist and reading-embedded programs were more willing to experiment with teaching methods whereas beginning teachers who graduated from general education

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/374262>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/374262>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)