

Linking Teacher Self-Efficacy to Teacher Evaluations

R. Shannon Finnegan

Self-efficacy and Evaluation

A major attribute of effective teaching is a teacher's sense of teacher self-efficacy, which influences teacher behavior, motivation, and impact on student outcomes. Teacher self-efficacy impacts the level of motivation a teacher exhibits towards their instructional behaviors. In a general sense, self-efficacy influences how much effort people put forth, how long they will persist in the face of obstacles, how resilient they are in dealing with failures, and how much stress or depression they experience in a difficult situation (Bandura, 1997). Applying this concept to the teaching profession, self-efficacy is a teacher's belief that they can produce desirable changes in student achievement. Teachers with high teacher self-efficacy expect and believe they can successfully provide challenging student instruction that will increase student performance. Teachers behave in ways that will enhance their views of themselves as competent teachers. Conversely, low teacher self-efficacy manifest when teachers do not expect to be successful with certain students, are less likely to persevere in preparation and delivery of instruction, and retreat at the first signs of difficulty (Tollefson, 2000).

Teachers' self-efficacy has recently been found to be a distinctive and significant predictor of classroom practices (Guo, Justice, & Kaderavek, Piasta, 2010). Self-efficacy beliefs become self-fulfilling prophecies, affirming capabilities or inabilities (Bandura, 1977). Teacher self-efficacy, a key motivational belief, influences teacher performance, building from four sources: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and psychological and emotional states (Bandura, 1977).

In this age of school accountability and, reform teachers undergo rigorous evaluations documenting their level of performance and quality of teaching. These evaluations include a substantial component of student growth scores. What will be

the effect of the evaluations on teachers' motivation? How will the evaluations build or deflate teacher self-efficacy? If teacher motivation plays a role in how well a teacher performs in the classroom, then will there be a correlation between teachers' evaluations and their subsequent motivation, which will in turn increase self-efficacy?

This review of literature explores the relationship between teacher evaluations and teacher self-efficacy by: 1) exploring the theoretical underpinnings and factors that influence and build teachers' sense of self-efficacy, 2) exploring administrators' influence on teacher self-efficacy, and 3) discussing the effect of teacher evaluations on teacher motivation and teacher self-efficacy. More rigorous teacher evaluation systems have the potential to enhance or to impair teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, and, therefore, attention must be paid to these issues because of the effect that teacher self-efficacy beliefs have on teachers' effort, persistence, and resilience.

Factors Influencing Teacher Self-Efficacy

Bandura's (1977) research identified teacher self-efficacy as a cognitive process by which people build beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given level of success. The construct of teacher self-efficacy can strengthen or weaken classroom instruction. Bandura (1997) found that teachers who held expectations of decreased success with certain students were less likely to persevere in planning and delivery of instruction and more likely to withdraw at the first signs of challenge. Understanding the factors that influence Bandura's (1997) construct of teacher self-efficacy deepens the field's knowledge and increases the possibility of encouraging, and developing high levels of teacher self-efficacy.

During the course of their careers, teachers develop outcome expectations and teacher self-efficacy expectations (Ashton & Webb, 1986;

Gibson & Dembo, 1984) that wield strong influences on their classroom interactions and willingness to use effort working with students with different abilities and levels of interest (Brophy & Good, 1970; Eccles & Wigfield, 1985).

Teacher self-efficacy plays a large role in moving students toward achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Self-efficacy beliefs become self-fulfilling prophecies that confirm perceptions of abilities or inabilities. Teaching efficacy manifests in teachers' confidence in their instructional practices, which impact student outcomes, regardless of a student's background or environment.

Teacher self-efficacy builds and feeds on four sources of information absorbed by the teacher: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and psychological and emotional states. These four sources help build motivational beliefs regulating teachers' perceptions of their abilities to help students succeed. Attention to building these beliefs from educational leaders through various means will improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

Mastery Experience

Mastery experience, the most powerful influence on teacher self-efficacy, occurs when teachers take on and master a new classroom skill or challenge. When individuals successfully master a challenging task, they begin to build a greater sense of self-efficacy. When a teacher later faces a similar experience, they are able to draw on the experience of mastery with a powerful expectation for success. For teachers, mastery experiences come from actual teaching accomplishments with students (Bandura, 1997). If a teacher perceives their teaching experience to be successful, their sense of teacher self-efficacy increases. This contributes to the teacher's expectation that future performance will be successful and experience an increase in motivation. Conversely, if a teacher perceives teaching as a failure, it lowers efficacy beliefs and motivation, contributing to the expectation that future performance also will be a failure.

Classroom Experience. As effective teachers become experts in supporting students to learn, establishing teachers who are motivated in teaching can reduce the problems in education. Ross (2007) contended, "More effective teaching should increase the likelihood of teachers obtaining mastery experiences, the strongest predictor of self-efficacy" (p.52). Teachers develop high teacher self-efficacy from their successes in the classroom (mastery experience) such as creating a classroom environment conducive to student achievement. As Allinder (1995) pointed out, teachers who have built strong self-efficacy through mastery experience, in turn, organized and maintained well-managed classrooms. They are also flexible in meeting student needs. Bandura (1997) asserted that the task of creating environments where learning is at center stage hangs on the teacher's self-efficacy.

Teacher self-efficacy drives the teachers' perception of their own performance in the classroom and can positively affect teachers' beliefs about their own teaching and instructional behaviors (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Teachers who exhibit high teacher self-efficacy demonstrated greater levels of planning and organization as well as enthusiasm for teaching (Allinder, 1995).

Additionally, teachers with a greater sense of teacher self-efficacy are more open to new ideas, experiment with new methods to meet student needs, and have greater levels of persistence and resilience (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Teachers with a strong sense of efficacy tend to do more planning and be better organized, be more open to new ideas and willing to experiment with new methods, work longer with students who are struggling and exhibit greater enthusiasm for teaching (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy 2001). Additionally, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) proposed that teachers' sense of efficacy informs teaching practices and student learning outcomes. Highly effective teachers seemed to use more classroom practices based on new conceptions of learning than less effective teachers did. These findings are in line with previous studies on the relationship between teachers' efficacy and their teaching (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy 2001). Tollefson (2000)

found that teachers who exerted increased instructional efforts needed to sustain collaborative and individualized instructional activities (e.g., cooperative groups, cross-age peer tutoring, problem-based learning) that linked to their beliefs that such activities improve student achievement. These teachers believe that they personally have the ability to implement such activities effectively.

Context and Experience. Even though teacher self-efficacy is somewhat stable over time, it is influenced by contextual variables. The characteristics of a student can be a factor influencing teacher self-efficacy, such as students' socio-economic status, traits, and behaviors. These factors may be perceived as an increased challenge to a teacher's task. Pajares' (1994) study found those teachers' feelings of not being prepared to teach students from diverse backgrounds influenced teacher self-efficacy. Teachers also may exhibit high levels of self-efficacy in one environment while exhibiting lower levels of self-efficacy in teaching a different grade level or a different subject (Ross & Brophy, 1998).

In an interview, Anita Woolfolk Hoy discussed her findings, noting that "quality of teaching resources available was related to novice teachers' sense of efficacy, but none of the five sources of support was related to experienced teachers' efficacy perceptions. Using school-level measures of resource support, quality of facilities, principal leadership, and teacher professionalism, we found modest relationships between the teachers' sense of efficacy and the quality of the facilities, and between efficacy and teacher professionalism. We have not yet found clear, strong connections between school levels of support and individual teacher's sense of efficacy" (Shaughnessy, 2004, p.).

Vicarious Experiences

Bandura (1997) found that vicarious experiences inform and contribute to a teacher's sense of self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences influence the building of self-efficacy by seeing other people successfully complete a task. Seeing that the task is doable helps teachers to feel that they can be successful, as well. However, the influence of vicarious learning becomes minimized

if the person thinks that the model does not share similar characteristics. For example, the model possesses distinctive skills or advantage that assists him/her with the task. An important aspect of vicarious experience requires that the task be modeled by someone that the observer of the task can identify or relate to if the experience is to be effective. If the observer closely identifies with the model, then the efficacy beliefs increase. Efficacy beliefs can be diminished when the observer differs with the model in ways that seem significant to the observer, i.e., level of experience, training, race, and gender.

Classroom Experience. Teachers rarely observe their fellow teachers at work, and consequently have limited occasions to observe the usefulness of their personal teaching procedures in contrast to those of their coworkers. Staff development activities introduce teachers to new teaching strategies, but procedures are rarely in place for teachers to practice the strategies and to receive feedback or coaching. Consideration should be given to organizing teaching schedules to allow for a concept such as grade level or content teaming that underscores team teaching, common planning time for teachers, and collective responsibility for student achievement (Tollefson, 2000).

Pre-service and In-service. Teacher self-efficacy appears to be more malleable in novice teachers than veteran teachers. Pre-service and in-service training can provide vicarious experiences influencing teacher self-efficacy. In a study of teachers in Scotland and America, Campbell (1996), found that in-service teachers obtained significantly higher scores in teacher self-efficacy ratings than their pre-service counterparts. The supports and coaching afforded new teachers cannot be underestimated in influencing a novice teacher's self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) asserted, "Expectations of personal efficacy do not operate as dispositional determinants independently of contextual factors" (p. 2030).

Social Persuasion

Social persuasion is another source for influencing teacher self-efficacy. The verbal interaction a teacher experiences about his or her performance and prospects for success from

respected others in the teaching context, such as administrators, colleagues, parents, members of the community, etc. can encourage or discourage teacher self-efficacy perceptions. When a trusted colleague tells you that you can be successful with a challenge, you are more likely to approach the task with a high expectation of success.

Teacher and Parent Support. On a daily basis, teachers encounter a high degree of stress and responsibility, which influences their teacher self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) discusses the influence of social persuasion on teacher self-efficacy and suggests that careful consideration be given to exploring what supports influence teacher self-efficacy.

Parental support and attitudes can contribute significantly to a school's climate and ultimately to student growth. A study by Garcia (2004) suggests some evidence that teachers with high levels of teacher self-efficacy are able to engage parents positively and create learning activities that require parental involvement. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) conducted a study of veteran teachers and found that the level of parent involvement predicted levels of teacher self-efficacy. Two studies conducted by Skaalvik and Skallvik (2010) revealed a strong correlation between teachers' ratings of self-efficacy, and whether teachers had a trusting, cooperative relationship with parents. Another finding indicated that these same perceptions of parental relationships were associated with the teachers' own feelings of accomplishment.

Psychological and Emotional

When teachers provide rigorous instruction that promotes student achievement they typically experience increased happiness in their abilities. Psychological and emotional states inform teacher self-efficacy. When a teacher conducts a lesson and has feelings of joy or pleasure from teaching the lesson there can be an increase the sense of efficacy. Classroom practices promoting warm relationships between teachers and students have been associated with positive student outcomes (Connor et al., 2005). However, if the teacher experiences high levels of stress or anxiety with fear of losing control, this can result in lower self-efficacy beliefs.

Teachers with a high sense of efficacy seem to employ a pattern of strategies that minimized negative effects and "promoted an expectation of classroom situations characterized by warm interpersonal relationships and academic work" (Ashton & Webb, 1986, p. 125). Teachers' perceptions of the positive and negative influences from administrators can influence teacher self-efficacy both psychologically and emotionally.

Teachers' explanations for student success or failure impact their interactions with students. Vital to teachers' relations with students is the "controllability dimension of the attributions teachers make" (Weiner, 1994). "The controllability dimension of attributions is related to willingness to help, to liking and positive affect, and to the emotions of anger and sympathy" (Weiner, 1979, p. 15). If a teacher views external factors outside of the control of the student as influencing student outcomes, the teacher is likely to provide support, to feel sympathy, and to like and interact positively with the student. Therefore, low achievement outcomes attributed to students' low ability are likely to bring feelings of sympathy, acts of kindness toward the student, and expressions of willingness to help from teachers (Tollefson, 2000).

Administrator's Influence

School administrators impact the direction of a school and subsequently influence self-efficacy beliefs of both their students and staff. The level of support an administrator provides to a teacher is one key determinant in their perceptions of teacher self-efficacy. Providing teachers with resources, such as time for planning, influences teachers' motivation. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) found that the lack of planning time needed to implement strategies the school proposed to increase student achievement in math and reading decreased teacher motivation. Ross (1994) expressed that leadership is a decisive variable in determining teachers' self-efficacy. The emotional or psychological experiences with various administrative leadership styles inform teachers' beliefs toward teacher self-efficacy. Weisel and Dror (2006) noted that there is a positive and significant relationship between supportive and non-threatening leadership and teacher self-efficacy.

In a study by Lee, Dedick, and Smith (1991) levels of teacher self-efficacy were reported low in schools where administrators were perceived to be passive and uninterested. Higher levels of teacher self-efficacy were found in schools where staff perceived that the school leadership provided staff with needed resources, allowed for flexibility and autonomy in the classroom, and protected them from a variety of school environmental issues. Additionally Lee et al. (1991) found that teachers perceptions of principals as willing to be didactic in pointing out skills and offering ideas for skill improvement, being responsive to teachers' needs, and emphasizing teacher accomplishments correlation with increased levels of teacher self-efficacy.

The leadership behaviors of the school's administration have a considerable effect on teachers' self-efficacy. Ross (1994) suggested that leadership is a decisive variable in determining teachers' self-efficacy. A positive relationship between supportive and non-threatening administrators and teacher self-efficacy exists (Weisel & Dror, 2006).

Connection Between the Teacher Evaluation and Teacher Self-Efficacy

The Education Reform Act of 2010 requires schools to include student growth in teacher evaluations. Policy makers and some education advocates question why students are performing below their counterparts in other countries. Experts in the field of economics rally an outcry that our current student body will not be equipped to meet the corresponded to the specific reviewer comments and/or recommendations. Also, please highlight the areas where the manuscript has been modified. petition of the 21st century global economy.

In response, researchers are investigating how to improve student outcomes through improving and evaluating effective teaching. States are creating a variety of models for evaluating the quality instruction of teachers. The research of Stronge and Tucker (2003) asserted that communication, collaboration, and commitment are essential elements of any teacher evaluation model. Stronge and Tucker (2003) further suggested that for the model to have value for both the teacher and

the district, the model must :(a) align its goals to goals of district, (b) base the evaluation on clearly defined job duties, (c) differentiate among achievement levels for each duty, (d) use multiple sources of data, (e) use a rubric for clear dialogue, and (f) maintain a clear focus on teacher growth and accountability.

Stronge (2003) contended that effective teachers improve student achievement. Teachers who are motivated by their belief that they can help students despite challenging obstacles have high teacher self-efficacy. These motivated teachers assess the means needed to promote student achievement. Teacher evaluations could provide a vehicle for improving teacher self-efficacy. Bandura (1997, p.68) stated, "people take their self-appraisal [more] seriously when they must choose between courses of action that have significant personal consequences."

An evaluation model that clearly articulates the tasks for teachers can influence self-efficacious behaviors. Bandura's research (1986) suggests that for self-efficacy to regulate effort effectively, teachers must have knowledge of the tasks they are trying to accomplish in order to strength teacher self-efficacy and increase levels of competence. Several states include some form or another of teachers creating Student Learning Outcomes as a portion of measure for including student achievement into teacher evaluations. Goals such as these according to the theory of self-efficacy could be the variable that would make a teacher's sense of personal satisfaction conditional upon high levels of achievement for all students. Many states are currently developing statewide goals and accountability systems that target high levels of achievement for all students. However, for such actions to be successful, it seems that teachers rather than legislators need to adopt a goal of high achievement for all students. Teachers' readiness to adopt such goals is related to the teachers' outcome and efficacy expectations (Tollefson, 2000).

The teacher evaluation systems, if left unclear, can increase teachers' faulty task- performance assessment producing misleading self-efficacy thoughts concerning the amount of effort needed to be extended, how long to sustain it, and when to

make corrective actions (Bandura, 1986). Consequently, the teacher evaluation systems may reveal evaluation results that rekindle the teachers' sense of motivation or result in low evaluation scores. Unless the definitions of the task and task circumstances articulate clear and concise expectations, employees may not accurately assess the complex task demands, may not fully know what they have to do and thus will lack accurate information for regulating their effort (Luthans & Stajkovic, 1998). As a result, this may lead employees to a faulty assessment of their perceived efficacy. "As a consequence, whenever people act on faulty judgment of their efficacy, they suffer adverse consequences" (Bandura, 1997, p.70).

Teaching is a complex task requiring a variety of skills and knowledge that needs to be imparted to students. Not all students learn in the same fashion but have varied instructional needs. Thus, teachers often consider attending ongoing professional development to acquire these complex skills for teaching all students. For some teachers, motivation and competency in acquiring these skills is an easier task than it is for teachers who have lesser perceptions of their capability to impact students' learning. Bandura (1986) suggests that tasks requiring lower complexity compared to higher complexity tasks require different skills for successful performance in placing greater demands on (a) required knowledge, (b) cognitive ability, (c) memory capacity, (d) behavioral facility, (e) information processing, (f) persistence, and (g) physical effort.

In order to increase teacher motivation and teaching self-efficacy the focus should be on enhancing teachers' self-efficacy beliefs versus, providing teacher training in new skills. To this end, the teacher evaluation system could also provide a vehicle for improved and more closely aligned staff development that could enhance teacher self-efficacy. Luthans and Stajkovic (1998) suggest that employees should also be instructed as to what means are necessary for successful performance and how to use those means. Bandura's (1997, p. 24) research shows a connection between teacher evaluations and an influence in teacher self-efficacy. He argued, "It is because people see

outcomes as contingent on the adequacy of their performance and care about those outcomes that they rely on efficacy beliefs in deciding which course of action to pursue and how long to pursue it" (Bandura 1997, p.24).

Truly effective evaluation models produce feedback to teachers, in addition to, professional dialogue between teacher and administrator and among peers and colleagues. An essential part of the teacher evaluation system is dialog and feedback (Stronge, 2003). Teachers should receive frequent and timely feedback to enhance teacher self-efficacy. When teachers were given areas to improve or reflect on, their perception of the effectiveness of the model was higher than when only praise was given (Milanowski & Heneman, 2001). Fullan (1993) argued that creating a clear evaluation system focused on continuous improvement would benefit schools and teachers would benefit and improve professional interactions between administration and educators to produce learning communities focused on student achievement and professional growth.

The discussion of teacher evaluations and the inclusion of student achievement in the assessment of a teacher's ability to educate is central to school reform. As school districts investigate different models of evaluation, they should not ignore the impact these models might have on teacher self-efficacy. Increasing teacher self-efficacy increases teachers' motivation and performance within the classroom. Teachers who have a strong sense of efficacy believe that they can affect student learning and in turn allocate substantial effort to achieve it; students may learn more from such teachers.

References

- Allinder, R. M. (1995). An examination of the relationship between teacher efficacy and curriculum-based measurement and student achievement. *Remedial and Special Education*, 16 (4), 247-255.
- Ashton, P., and Webb, R. (1986). *Making a Difference: Teachers' Sense of Efficacy and Student Achievement*, Longman, New York.

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1995). *Self-efficacy in changing societies*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Brophy, J. E., and Good, T. L. (1970). Teachers' communication of differential expectations for children's classroom performance: Some behavioral data. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 61: 365-374.
- Eccles, J. S., and Wigfield, A. (1985). *Teacher expectations and student motivations: Teacher expectancies*, Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ, pp. 185-217.
- Fullan, M. (1993). *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform*. London: Falmer Press.
- Gibson, S., and Dembo, M. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 76: 569-582.
- Guo, Y., Piasta, S. B., Justice, L. M., & Kaderavek, J. N. (2010). Relations among preschool teachers' self-efficacy, classroom quality and children's language and literacy gains. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 1094-1103.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2006). Transformational school leadership for large-scale reform: Effects on students, teachers, and their classroom practices. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 17 (2), 201-217.
- Luthans, F. & Stajkovic, A (1998). Self-Efficacy and work-related performance: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 124 (2), 240-26.
- Milanowski, A. T., & Heneman, H. G., III. (2001). Assessment of teacher reactions to a standards-based teacher evaluation system: A pilot study. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, 15(3), 193-212.
- Pajares, F. (1996). Self-efficacy beliefs in achievement settings. *Review of Educational Research*, 66, 543-578.
- Ross, J. A. (1994). The impact of an in-service to promote cooperative learning on the stability of teacher efficacy. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 10 (4), 381-394.
- Ross, J. (2007). Professional development effects on teacher efficacy: results of randomized field trial. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 101 (1), 50-60.
- Ross, J. A., & Brophy, J. (1998). The antecedents and consequences of teacher efficacy. (J. Brophy, Ed.) *Advances in Research on Teaching*. JAI Press. Retrieved from <http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&btnG=Search&q=intitle:The+antecedents+and+consequences+of+teacher+efficacy#0>
- Shaughnessy, M. F. (2004). An Interview with Anita Woolfolk: The Educational Psychology of Teacher Efficacy. *Educational Psychology Review*, 16(2), 153-176. doi:10.1023/B:EDPR.0000026711.15152.1f
- Tollefson, N. (2000). Classroom Applications of Cognitive Theories of Motivation, 12(1), 63-83.
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2007). Dimensions of teacher self-efficacy and relations with strain factors, perceived collective teacher efficacy, and teacher burnout. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99 (3), 611-625.
- Stronge, J. H., & Tucker, P. D. (2003). *Handbook on teacher evaluation: Assessing and improving performance*. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education.
- Ross, J. A., & Brophy, J. (1998). The antecedents and consequences of teacher efficacy. (J. Brophy, Ed.) *Advances in Research on Teaching*. JAI Press. Retrieved from <http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&btnG>

=Search&q=intitle:The+antecedents+and+consequences+of+teacher+efficacy#0

- Shaughnessy, M. F. (2004). An Interview with Anita Woolfolk: The Educational Psychology of Teacher Efficacy. *Educational Psychology Review, 16*(2), 153–176.
doi:10.1023/B:EDPR.0000026711.15152.1f
- Tollefson, N. (2000). Classroom Applications of Cognitive Theories of Motivation, *12*(1), 63–83.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk-Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17*, 783-805.
- Tschannen- Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W. (2007). The differential antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23* (6), 944-956.
- Tschannen-Moran, M. T., Hoy, W. A., & Hoy, W. K. (1998). Teacher Efficacy: Its meaning and measure. *Review of Educational Research, 68* (2), 202-248.
- Weiner, B. (1979). A theory of motivation for some classroom experiences. *Journal Educational Psychology, 71*: 3–25
- Weisel, A., & Dror, O. (2006). School climate, sense of efficacy and Israeli teachers' attitudes toward inclusion of students with special needs. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice, 1* (2), 157-174.