


Context and Implications Document for: A comparative analysis of predictors of teacher self-efficacy in student engagement, instruction and classroom management in Nordic, Anglo-Saxon, and East and South-East Asian countries

Sina Fackler¹ , Pamela Sammons² and Lars-Erik Malmberg²

¹Leibniz-Institute for Educational Trajectories, Leibniz, Germany, ²University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

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Author's introduction

Teacher self-efficacy has been found to be a desirable teacher trait across countries. However, there is little known about the context to which it develops with respect to classroom practices, and the different aims of national curricula and cultural norms, and the different extent to which they are prevalent in different countries. This study makes use of the international TALIS (Teaching And Learning International Survey) from 2013 taking 11 out of the 32 countries that can be formed into three clusters, which share similarities in their education systems: the Anglo-Saxon cluster (Australia, the UK and the USA), the Nordic cluster (Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland), and the East and South-East Asian cluster (Singapore, China, South Korea and Malaysia). With the use of national values as determined by Hofstede and the GLOBE researchers it was possible to interpret some of the differences in characteristics of teacher self-efficacy concerning (i) the teachers themselves, e.g., the attitude towards teaching or gender, (ii) the classroom, e.g., classroom climate or student composition (iii), the principal, e.g., leadership style and (iv) the school, e.g., school size or status (public vs. private). One main finding was that classrooms and schools

provide work environments which are perceived very differently, and that teachers have different needs that should be addressed to promote teacher self-efficacy.

Implications for practice

Given the multitude of desirable associations the three different types of self-efficacy were found to have with, for example, constructivist beliefs about teaching, classroom climate and the principal's instructional leadership, it would be worthwhile for education policy to pay attention to this concept. As the group of countries was rather diverse, we will not suggest particular courses of action for single countries, but rather introduce some general guiding principles. We suggest the following three areas for development of policy and practice: (1) initial teacher training, (2) professional development of teachers and (3) the principal's authority.

1. As for initial teacher training, teachers should be provided with the opportunity to gain their first supervised teaching experience early on. This could, for example, happen through placements where prospective teachers are paired with experienced teachers and observe their lessons, gain their first supervised teaching experience upon which they then reflect with their more experienced colleagues, and are provided with a network of colleagues, forming a strong professional community. This will help student teachers to acquire positive initial teaching experiences and will help them to develop effective classroom practices, which could in turn lead to a higher level of TSE (Teacher Self-Efficacy) from the start. It seems advisable to pay attention to classroom management strategies early on, helping to maintain a positive classroom climate and foster constructivist beliefs about teaching during that early phase.
2. Professional development is an instrument which helps teachers to reflect on their classroom practices and become more aware of recent developments for teaching strategies which, for example, promote a positive classroom climate, and aspects of constructivism. It can be an opportunity to discuss their teaching with a larger group of colleagues and to get insight into teaching in different contexts. This might support their self-efficacy as they will identify less efficient classroom practices, get feedback on areas of improvement and possibly boost their belief in their own abilities by strengthening their professional knowledge and practice, thereby engendering greater confidence. With regard to professional development for principals, a focus should be on developing an instructional leadership style, which was found beneficial for a higher level of TSE.
3. The principal's sense of authority plays an important role in the development of TSE beyond the leadership style or other person-related features. Principals are encouraged to promote strategies for classroom composition which can enhance classroom climate, introduce support structures for teachers, allocate funds for teacher professional development, and establish strong ties with regional authorities. It seems worthwhile to enable a climate of mutual support at their schools, where mentorship is valued and trust among teachers is fostered and reciprocated. Such a climate of mutual support can provide opportunities for TSE to flourish as

teachers find themselves in an environment where their teaching is valued and they feel that their efforts are worthwhile.

This list is of course not exhaustive, but it provides some starting points by suggesting how establishing and maintaining an environment where TSE can flourish may lead to stronger education systems, and ultimately this may in turn support better student outcomes. With respect to the international nature of the research, the applicability of these strategies in each country would need to be gauged in the light of sociocultural values and be discussed individually. Finally, by making comparisons among different clusters of countries, the potential role of cultural differences in shaping TSE is recognised.

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