

Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Teaching Family Life Education

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ABSTRACT

Although the notion of self-efficacy has been applied to many domains, little is known regarding teacher efficacy in teaching family life. Self-efficacy in this study refers to teachers' beliefs that their efforts can improve students' moral characters and behaviors in relation to family life. In Malaysian secondary schools, aspects of family life are taught through five different subjects. Therefore, there is a need for studying teachers' self-efficacy in teaching family life, which is the main purpose of this research. In this research, the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale, developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), was used to measure teachers' self-efficacy. Data was collected from 419 secondary school teachers who teach family life. Findings indicated that respondents had moderate self-efficacy for the overall teaching efficacy as well as three sub dimensions of efficacy. The implication of the study is discussed in the last part of the paper. Suggestions offered are hopefully to be considered to enhance and foster teacher efficacy in teaching family life.

Keywords: Teachers' efficacy beliefs, teachers' sense of efficacy, Family Life Education

INTRODUCTION

Individuals' beliefs play an important role with regard to their behaviors. The realization of our objectives is based on our beliefs about how we can behave successfully. Individuals judge their own capabilities according to their own actions (making a decision about a certain task, making or exerting an effort to accomplish a task, or confronting difficulties). All these

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 13 August 2012

Accepted: 21 September 2012

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play an important role in understanding one's self-efficacy beliefs.

The concept of a teacher's self-efficacy has gained much attention in recent years (Siti Safariah, 2009; Abd. Rahim, Mohd. Majid, Rashid, & Novel, 2008; Cheung, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). Beginning with research done in the 1970s, a teacher's self-efficacy was first conceptualized as his or her general capacity to influence students' performance (Allinder, 1995, p. 247). Since then, the concept of a teacher's self-efficacy has developed continuously. Bandura (1995) defined self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations." Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) defined a teacher's efficacy as the teacher's "judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among students who may be difficult or unmotivated" (p. 783).

Education research has suggested that teachers' self-efficacy has proven to be one of the most powerful predictors in determining student outcomes and effective teaching practice. In classrooms with teachers of high self-efficacy, students are more academically motivated, more likely to have high self-efficacy themselves, and more likely to achieve academic success (Angelle, 2002; Margolis & McCabe, 2006; Siegle & McCoach, 2007). In other words, students benefit from having teachers with high self-efficacy.

The powerful effects of self-efficacy can be seen in teachers' actions. A teacher's behavior varies with his or her self-efficacy beliefs. Teachers with high self-efficacy spend more time planning and organizing classroom activities and they are more open to new methods and ideas to meet students' needs. Teachers with high self-efficacy also are more likely to develop classrooms with mastery goal structures, use inquiry and student-centered teaching strategies, focus on learning and improvement, and view difficult students as reachable (Shidler, 2009; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). In contrast, teachers with low self-efficacy devote more time to non academic matters, criticizing students for their failures and giving up on students who do not succeed. Teachers with low self-efficacy are also more likely to report higher levels of anger and stress and more likely to use teacher-directed strategies, such as lectures and readings from the text (Hoy, 2004; Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004).

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

Preparing individuals and families for roles and responsibilities of family living is nothing new. Traditionally, knowledge related to family roles and responsibilities was transmitted through non formal education, where much was learned in the family setting itself as family members observed and participated in family activities and interactions. However, in a more complex and changing society today, the development of new knowledge,

advances in technology, and changes in social conditions create circumstances in which this traditional method may not be appropriate or sufficient. Families must be supported in their educational efforts by activities of other institutions, such as schools (IPPF, 2011).

Family life is defined as an educational program designed to help prepare students for effective parenthood by learning about child development and the role of parents (IPPF, 2011). The purposes of the program are to help girls and boys gain knowledge about their growth, development, and reproduction, including changes that will occur during adolescence and responsibilities prior to parenthood. Education researchers have suggested several rationales for teaching family life. It is seen as a way of preparing families by providing adequate knowledge of dealing with social change, developing healthy and responsible relationships, enriching family life, and promoting the quality of family life. With regard to this, Dana (2002) in the project "Prepare Tomorrow's Parent" indicated that young people must be prepared not only for school work but also for the one occupation most of them will have parenthood. Therefore, to develop healthy and harmonious families for a better future, we must strengthen teaching and learning strategies to prepare future parents with adequate parenting knowledge and skills.

In Malaysia, aspects of family life are taught in secondary school through five different subjects: Home Economic,

Moral education, Physical and Health Science education, Civic and Citizenship education and Islamic education. The current Malaysian teacher education training programs require prospective teachers to complete coursework both in general education and in subject matter areas. At the moment, several drawbacks can be observed in the program for family life. First, there is no teacher education program specifically offered for family life education teachers. Teachers are introduced to topics related to family life through one or several subjects during usual teacher education programs. However, they are required to teach the aspects of family life through Home Economic education Moral education, Physical and Health Science education, Civic and Citizenship education, and Islamic education. Second, sometimes a non option teacher teaches one of these five subjects. Besides, the Curriculum Development Centre (2005) reported that teachers have problems in inculcating values in teaching and learning. They have difficulty making a connection between the content they teach with values observed and a lack of pedagogical knowledge relating values to the subject matter. This is due to insufficient knowledge and skills obtained during teacher education training. Since teaching family life is very much related to the calculation of student values, there is a need for studying teachers' self-efficacy in teaching family life.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to determine secondary school teachers' self-efficacy in teaching family life. Specifically, the objective was to find out the level of self-efficacy in family life education teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

The sample selected to identify the level of self-efficacy in the family life education teachers consisted of five different options of teaching. There were teachers of Home Economic education, Moral education, Physical and Health Science education, Civics and Citizenship and Islamic education. The sample included 73 of Home Economics teacher, 72 of Moral education teacher, 93 of Physical and Health Science education teacher, 89 of Civics and Citizenship education teacher and 92 of Islamic education teachers.

Instrumentation

The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES), developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), was used in this study. The inventory consisted of 24 items with three sub dimensions (instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement) and was measured using a 9-point likert scale: 1 (nothing), 3 (very little), 5 (some influence), 7 (quite a bit), and 9 (a great deal). Each sub-dimension of the inventory consisted of eight items. This inventory was adapted to Bahasa Malaysia by Rahmah (2005) using

back-to-back translation. Cronbach' alpha coefficient for the overall inventory was .96, efficacy in instructional strategies .91, efficacy in classroom management .86, and efficacy in student engagement .91. The scores obtained showed a high degree of reliability.

Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to data collection, approvals were obtained from the Educational Planning and Research Division (EPRD), Ministry of Education Malaysia; the State Department of Education; and school principals. Survey questionnaires were sent to principals of selected schools, who later distributed them to appropriate teachers selected as respondents on the basis of the criteria set by the researcher. The survey questionnaires included the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale and questions about the respondents' backgrounds. The completed data was analyzed using descriptive analysis to get the mean ratings of efficacy and its three sub-dimensions.

RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

Of the 419 respondents, 319, or 76.1%, teachers were female, with the majority being Malay teachers. A total of 53.2% were teaching in urban schools, having less than five years of experience in teaching family life, with a mean of 6.75 years of experience in teaching family life. There were 60 (14.3%) respondents who had no experience in teaching family life.

The study also showed that 53.7% of the respondents taught in areas of their subject options, while 46.3% of the respondents did not get an opportunity to teach according to their subject options. The average age of the respondents was 39.26 years. The demographic profile indicated an uneven distribution of teachers between the subjects taught and their teaching subject options, gender, and teaching experiences.

Teaching Efficacy of Secondary School Teachers in Family Life Education

As shown in Table 3, the findings of this study show that the mean for the overall self-efficacy of secondary school teachers in teaching Family Life education was 6.43, with a standard deviation (SD) of .81. The self-efficacy mean for instructional strategies was 6.55 (SD .91), classroom management 6.59 (SD .87), and student engagement 6.14 (SD .83). In comparing

TABLE 1
Demographic profile of respondents

Characteristic	Frequency (n=419)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	100	23.9
Female	319	76.1
Ethnicity		
Malay	380	90.7
Chinese	11	2.6
Indian	25	6.0
Other ethnic	3	0.7
School locality		
Urban	223	53.2
Rural	196	46.8
Age	(Mean: 39.26)	(SD= 7.79)
Less than 30 years	63	15.0
31 to 39 years	156	37.2
40 to 48 years	142	33.9
49 years and above	58	13.8
Experience in teaching family life	(Mean: 6.75)	(SD= 6.91)
No experience	60	14.3
less than 5 years	156	37.2
5 to 15 years	133	31.7
More than 15 years	70	16.7
Teaching subject option		
Non option teacher	194	46.3
Option teacher	225	53.7

TABLE 2
Demographic profile of teachers who taught family life

Characteristic	Home Economic		Moral		Health		Civic		Islamic	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age										
< 30	8	11.0	15	20.8	15	16.1	21	23.6	4	4.3
31– 39 years	20	27.4	28	38.9	39	41.9	32	36.0	37	40.2
40 – 48 years	23	31.5	21	29.2	32	34.4	29	32.6	37	40.2
> 49 years	22	30.1	8	11.1	7	7.5	7	7.9	14	15.2
Total	73	100	72	100	93	100	89	100	92	100
Experience in teaching family life										
No experience	4	5.5	17	23.6	17	18.3	14	15.7	8	8.7
< 5 years	16	21.9	35	48.6	34	36.6	62	69.7	9	9.8
5-15 years	29	39.7	15	20.8	29	31.2	12	13.5	48	52.2
> 15 years	24	32.9	5	6.9	13	14.0	1	1.1	27	29.3
Total	73	100	72	100	93	100	89	100	92	100
Teaching subject option										
Option teacher	62	84.9	19	26.4	50	53.8	2	2.2	92	100
Non option teacher	11	15.1	53	73.6	43	46.2	87	97.8	-	-
Total	73	100	72	100	93	100	89	100	92	100
Teaching subject										
Major	56	76.7	17	23.6	35	37.6	7	7.9	92	100
Minor	17	23.3	55	76.4	58	62.4	82	92.1	-	-
Total	73	100	72	100	93	100	89	100	92	100

the three sub dimensions of self-efficacy, results indicate that the respondents had the highest efficacy in classroom management and the lowest in student engagement. Table 4 indicates that the overall efficacy mean score was the highest for Islamic education teachers and the lowest for Civic and Citizenship education teachers in all three sub dimensions.

DISCUSSION

Overall, this study provides insight into how teachers perceive their self-efficacy

in teaching Family Life education. The results of this study show that self-efficacy of secondary school teachers in teaching family life is high. The majority of the respondents have a high efficacy in all three sub-dimensions of self-efficacy, especially classroom management. The findings are consistent with those of Siti Safariah (2009), Abd. Rahim *et al.*, (2008), and Teng (2006). The results of this study are also in line with previous research (Cakiroglu, Cakiroglu, & Boone, 2005; Cheung, 2008), which reported that teachers perceive themselves as having high efficacy. Cheung (2008) and Kotaman

TABLE 3

The mean scores and standard deviation of secondary school teachers' efficacy for three levels of efficacy and the respective sub-dimensions (N=419)

Factors	Mean	SD
Overall Teacher Efficacy	6.43	.81
Instructional Strategies	6.55	.91
Classroom Management	6.59	.87
Student Engagement	6.14	.83

TABLE 4

Mean and standard deviation of teachers' self efficacy and the respective sub-dimensions

Types of teachers	n	Overall Teacher Efficacy		Instructional Strategies		Classroom Management		Student Engagement	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Home Economic	73	6.51	.76	6.18	.78	6.71	.81	6.63	.83
Moral	72	6.33	.86	6.03	.84	6.52	1.0	6.43	.94
Health	93	6.49	.84	6.17	.90	6.60	.84	6.70	.97
Civic	89	6.21	.77	5.94	.80	6.36	.80	6.33	.87
Islamic	92	6.58	.81	6.35	.80	6.60	.87	6.65	.90

(2010), in their studies revealed that most teachers have a better understanding of the efficacy of their actions in the classroom and their abilities to influence the learning process of their students compared to their confidence in helping students value their learning.

The main reason for Islamic education teachers scoring the highest and Civic and Citizenship education teachers scoring the lowest in all three sub dimensions may be the teachers' education backgrounds. As shown in Table 2, 100% of Islamic education teachers teach according to their subject option, and most of them indicate that Islamic education is their major subject.

On the contrary, 97.8% of Civic and Citizenship education teachers are non

option teachers. In addition, 92.1% of them teach this subject as their minor subject. These findings indicate that there is a mismatch between the teachers' options and the subjects taught. According to Wu and Chang (2006) and Yilmaz and Cavas (2008), teacher education training programs play a significant role in fostering teacher efficacy. The number of courses taken related to their subject matters during the education programs will influence teachers' self-efficacy. Even though the Curriculum Development Centre provides training in family life education, it does not involve all teachers. This may result in insufficiency of in-depth content knowledge and conceptual understanding of family life teaching issues, which, in turn, may affect the teachers'

confidence and ability to teach family life.

Another reason may be the experiences that teachers have had. The study shows that the majority of Civic and Citizenship education teachers have less than five years of experience in teaching family life education; some of them have no experience in teaching family life compared to Islamic teachers. Wilson and Tan (2004), in their study on the efficacy of elementary school social studies teachers, found that teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience have greater self-efficacy than those with less than 20 years of teaching experience. Age is a factor closely linked to years of experience (Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan, & Quek, 2008). With more years of experience, teachers can see, experience, and handle different situations and critically reflect on those situations (Hui & Cheung, 2004). This can help them grow in confidence and handle similar situations better or in a more mature way the next time they come across them.

On the basis of the results of the study, teacher education training needs to evaluate efficacy levels of the teachers' teaching process and find ways to enhance their efficacy beliefs regarding family life education. Because of the vital role that teachers play in educating the younger generation regarding family life, teacher education training needs to provide ongoing support for teachers, especially Civic and Citizenship education teachers, so that they can develop and maintain strong self-efficacy in teaching family life. In addition, professional development programs should

target not only English, Science, and Math teachers but also family life education teachers to strengthen their knowledge and pedagogical skills on issues related to family life.

CONCLUSION

Teacher efficacy is an important issue in the field of education, especially when society wants to increase its quality of education and the future of its people's values and morals. By examining the self-efficacy of secondary school family life education teachers, this study concludes that these teachers perceive themselves as having high efficacy in teaching family life. To successfully implement family life education programs, teachers' self-efficacy needs to be given true attention. This is where teachers' beliefs regarding their ability to teach family life and improve students' moral behaviors and family values need to be enhanced.

This study concludes with a list of recommendations for teachers to foster their self-efficacy in teaching family life:

- i. Have more vicarious experiences, such as watching and observing experienced teachers teach.
- ii. Establish peer relationships for effective guidance and support from experienced teachers.
- iii. Create more opportunities for self-reflective, context-based, in-class teaching practice as a mean to gain mastery or enactive experience.
- iv. Analyze the complex task of teaching, studying the demanding task in detail,

holistically as well as in separate individual segments, for better understanding and application.

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