



Reformation of Self-Efficacy in Iranian Pre-service and In-service EFL Teachers through Reflective Task-supported Teacher Training

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Abstract

Since the pioneering work of [1], teachers' self-efficacy defined as teachers' judgments of their own capabilities to deal effectively with various educational situations and tasks [2], in context-specific, cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social ways [3], has been considered as one of the most central and pervasive thoughts that affect teachers' actions. This study was an endeavor to explore how a particular teacher training program at a language institute in Tabriz which provided pre-service and in-service teachers with opportunities to practice various pedagogical tasks and also reflect on their own and others' performance can influence their self-efficacy. To achieve this goal, a quasi-experimental design was adopted. 37 pre-service and 40 in-service teachers participated in the study. The teacher sense of efficacy scale (TSES) was utilized to explore fluctuations in teachers' self-efficacy. The results revealed that the teacher training program was influential in enhancing the self-efficacy of both pre-service and in-service teachers.

1. Introduction

It is widely-conceded that the success of any educational program highly depends on the pivotal role played by the teachers. Teachers as practitioners of educational principles and theories play fundamental role in education. Therefore, it is not striking to see how many people seem to have opinion about teacher preparation. However, it should be noticed that teaching is a complex cultural activity which is mostly controlled by beliefs and perceptions that mostly act outside the realm of consciousness [4]

People's ability to exercise control over outcomes makes people able to realize desired futures and to forestall undesired ones. This capability provides powerful incentives for the development and exercise of personal control over situations. According to [5], people's beliefs of personal efficacy make causal contributions to organize and execute the courses of actions required to manage prospective situations and as a result exert control over their functioning. He continues that it is people's beliefs in their causative capabilities that control their level of motivation, affective states and actions.

Four sources of self-efficacy beliefs [2], are *mastery experiences*, *vicarious experiences*, *social persuasion* and finally *physiological and emotional states*, which mean that self-efficacy theory emphasizes interaction between personal (cognitive) factors, individual behaviour and environmental conditions. All these sources are needed to be attended while designing teacher educational programs intended in altering teachers' beliefs, expectations and self-efficacy for better and, hence; improve educational systems.

1.1 Teachers' perception of their efficacy in teaching

One important belief that appears to be an important influence on teacher and student outcomes is teachers' sense of efficacy which is defined by [6], as a concept related to people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce given outcomes. This affective personal quality is defined as a motivational construct based on self-perception of competence to produce given outcomes. According to Bandura's social-cognitive theory (1977), self-efficacy is a crucial mechanism of behavioural change which is initiated by cognitive events. Bandura has asserted that the expectation of personal efficacy determines whether some behaviour will be initiated and the extent to which it will be sustained in problem solving situations. Teachers' academic optimism is a way of positive thinking which empowers optimist teachers and also students who always watch their teacher as a model [7].

Even a cursory examination of the role of self-efficacy in personal functioning and task fulfillment highlights the significance of teacher self-efficacy in teaching achievement. High sense of self-efficacy will initiate behaviour directed to outcomes; whereas lack of strong beliefs in one's own efficacy, as

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suggested by Djigic, et al. [6], will deter individuals from the pursuit of their objective and hamper success. [8] considered teacher efficacy as a powerful predictive construct and underscored the critical need for investigating the processes by which this multi-faceted trait is built and enhance.

2. Research questions

The current study aimed to investigate the influence of reflective and task-supported teacher training as an on pre-service and in-service teachers' self-efficacy. So the following questions are designed:

1. Does reflective task-supported teacher training influence pre-service teachers' self-efficacy?
2. Does reflective task-supported teacher training influence in-service teachers' self-efficacy?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

This study was conducted with two different groups of participants at an English institute in Tabriz, Iran. The first group consisted of teacher applicants who had passed TOEFL exam with the cut-off score 500 and were admitted to the pre-service teacher training program in this institute. This group was composed of 37 both male and female would-be teachers who attended the pre-service teacher training course with the hope of getting recruited for a teaching job in that institute. Teacher applicants hold a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Master of Arts (MA) degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). The training course took 60 hours including 30 hours of training, 10 hours of observation, and 20 hours of teaching practices (TPs). Finally, all applicants were assessed based on their Demo presentations and they were found to be qualified individuals for teaching English. Fortunately they were all approved by the Research and Development Department (R & D) of the institute for teaching in that institute.

The second group included teacher trainees who had teaching experience of between two to six years in this English institute. This group consisted of 40 both male and female teacher trainees who had previously participated in different types of pre-service teacher training courses which were neither reflective nor task-supported, and were selected by R & D department for teaching in this institute. However, these teachers after starting their teaching job for few terms in this institute, and due to their observed weaknesses were required to participate in an in-service teacher training programs to renew and update their knowledge and skills, engage in varied tasks and activities such as reflecting on their own experiences and colleagues' performance, discuss their beliefs about teaching a foreign language, read about curriculum development and different approaches to language teaching, design lesson plans and collaborate with teacher trainers and colleagues to solve some of their practical problems in class. Considering their experience of teaching and classroom management and also their previous involvement in a type of teacher training program at the onset of their teaching job in the institute, in-service teacher trainees needed less rehearsal activities so that the duration of the in-service course got shorter than pre-service course's (it took about 30 hours), but the content and modules of pre- service teacher training course and in-service teacher development course were the same.

3.2 Instrumentation

To measure teacher applicants' and trainees' sense of self-efficacy and confidence in teaching English, the researcher used the original version of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy (TSES) questionnaire [10], (Appendix A). The TSES items were likert scales from one to nine. A rating of one indicated that the respondent could do nothing about the statement presented. A rating of nine indicated that the participant could do a great deal about the statement. Three factors were identified in the TSES: (1) Efficacy for student engagement, (2) Efficacy for instructional strategies, and (3) Efficacy for classroom management. The reliability of the original TSES is .90 which shows that TSES can be considered a reliable measurement of teacher self-efficacy. However, as the target group and the condition of research were different, reestablishing the reliability and validity of the instrument through piloting was necessary.

3.3 Procedure

This quasi-experimental study followed a pretest-posttest design. To determine the reliability and validity of the scale for the setting of the study, 25 teachers of the institute, out of the study, were volunteered. They filled out the form, expressed their opinion about the questionnaire (in Persian) and analyses of the data from them revealed that, TSES with $\alpha = 0.8$ is appropriate for this setting and participants. The result of Cronbach internal consistency is provided in table 1.



Table 1 *The Reliability Estimated for Self-efficacy Questionnaire through Cronbach's Alpha*

| | N of included items | N of excluded items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| SE questionnaire | 24 | 0 | .8 |

SE: Self Efficacy

After conducting the pilot study, the data on teachers' self-efficacy were obtained by administering the questionnaire before and after the RTSTT course. Of course, the order of the items on the TSES questionnaire had been altered in the second administration.

4. Results

4.1 The Effect of RTSTT on the Self-efficacy of the Pre-service Group

The descriptive statistics for the pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in the pretest and the immediate posttest is provided in table 2. As indicated in the table, the pre-service teachers' self-efficacy has experienced change as the result of the training from Time 1 ($M = 2.51$, $SD = .42$) to Time 2 ($M = 7.94$, $SD = .16$).

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics of Self-efficacy for the Pre-service Group*

| | | N | Mean | SD |
|--------|--------|----|------|-----|
| Pair 1 | Time 1 | 37 | 2.51 | .42 |
| | Time 2 | 37 | 7.94 | .16 |

Results of the paired-samples t-test conducted to evaluate the impact of the teacher training on the pre-service teachers' self-efficacy (Table 3) demonstrated that there was a statistically significant change in teachers' self-efficacy from the pretest to the immediate posttest, $t(36) = 75.78$, $p < .0005$ (two-tailed). The Sig. value (Sig. = .000) is less than .05, so that we can conclude that there is a significant difference between two times. The mean change in the pre-service teachers is 5.43 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 5.57 to 5.28.

Table 3 *Paired Samples T-Test of the Self-efficacy for the Pre-service Group*

| | | Paired Difference | | Std. Error Mean | t | df | Sig. (two-tailed) |
|--------|----------------|-------------------|-----|-----------------|--------|----|-------------------|
| | | Mean | SD | | | | |
| Pair 1 | Time1 - Time 2 | -5.43 | .43 | .071 | -75.78 | 36 | .000 |

In order to find out more about the magnitude of the teacher training effect, the researcher calculated the effect size statistic (η^2) through the following procedure:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Eta squared} &= t^2 \div ((t^2) + N - 1) \\ &= (75.78)^2 \div ((75.78)^2 + 36) \\ &= .99 > .14 \end{aligned}$$

So we can conclude that there was a large effect, with a substantial difference in the pre-service groups' self-efficacy obtained before and after the training.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The present study set out to explore the effect of reflective task-supported teacher training on enhancing pre-service and in-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The results from the study clarified the positive effect of the considered type of teacher training program on self-efficacy beliefs of both pre-service and in-service groups. While both groups' self-efficacy improved from the pretest to the immediate posttest, the pre-service group indicated more progress.

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