

Conference Paper

Investigating Preservice Teachers' Efficacy Level and Factors Influencing It

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Abstract

This study investigated preservice teachers' efficacy level and factors influencing it. The participants were English Language Teaching students of cohort 2015, *Universitas Negeri Malang*. The data were taken from 41 preservice teachers by using an online questionnaire and a face-to-face interview. The online questionnaire provided the data about the participants' efficacy level and factors influencing it. The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) was adapted to measure the participants' efficacy level. An in-depth interview with six respondents who agreed to participate was conducted to follow-up the questionnaire data. The interview was aimed to get profound data about factors influencing the participants' efficacy level. The preservice teachers reported that four significant factors influenced their self-efficacy of teaching. They are the participants' experience in a formal and informal teaching practice, feedback and support from the school environment, observing other teachers' performance, and English proficiency as factors influencing their efficacy. The average result also shows that the preservice teachers' efficacy level was 3.31 (5-scale rating for highly effective). The participants perceived that they were highly efficacious in instructional strategies (3.41) and a little efficacious in student engagement (3.16). By knowing their efficacy level, preservice teachers are suggested to start joining teacher professional development (TPD) to develop and maintain their English and teaching skill. In-service teachers are also suggested to join TPD to maintain their skills because preservice teachers look up to them as role models. Preservice teachers should also be given support from in-service teachers and Department of English.

Keywords: preservice teacher, teacher-efficacy, student engagement, instructional strategies

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Received: 17 February 2020

Accepted: 20 February 2020

Published: 27 February 2020

Publishing services provided by
Knowledge E

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Selection and Peer-review under

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Conference Committee.

1. Introduction

Studies show that teacher efficacy is important and has significance of effect on teachers' performance in the class (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 1998: 233; Guskey and Passaro (1994: 628); Pandergast, Garvis, and Keogh (2011: 46); by Kavanoz, Yüksel, and Özcan (2015: 6). Thus, it has become relevant topic in educational research. Numerous research investigates teacher efficacy level in in-service teachers and preservice teachers as well.

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According to Bandura (1997), there are four sources that construct individuals' self-efficacy. Those are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and emotional arousal. Mastery experiences are obtained from the success or failure in doing specific task. The success of doing specific task will strengthen individuals' efficacy level whereas the failure will weaken their efficacy level. The second source is vicarious experiences. It is a source of self-efficacy that is obtained when individuals observe others performing a specific task. The third is verbal persuasion. When individuals get evaluative feedback from credible people, the feedback can strengthen their beliefs of their capabilities to achieve the goals. The other source is emotional arousal. Emotional arousal in the form of mood, stress and subjective threads affects people performance (Chacón, 2005: 259).

A preservice teacher is any student who is studying teacher education program (Pendergast, et al., 2011: 48). Research about efficacy in preservice teachers are considered important because efficacy is most malleable in preservice teachers (Bandura 1997). During their study, preservice teachers have to put their coursework knowledge into practice during formal teaching practice. That experience provides first-hand experience of teaching. Their experience in formal teaching practice will influence how they see teaching as their future profession. Previous research showed the decreasing efficacy of preservice teachers after finishing formal teaching practice (Pendergast, et al., 2011: 53; Garvis, Pendergast and Keogh, 2012). On the contrary, a research by Brown, Lee, and Collins (2015) showed that school-based professional experience can increase teachers' efficacy level. The decreasing efficacy level after formal teaching practice happened because there was a gap between the preservice teachers' expectation and the reality (Pendergast, et al., 2011: 54). Based on their vicarious learning, the successful teaching performance made them believe they are capable teachers. However, the reality might be different. That gap possibly made teachers lower their standard to avoid disappointment or self-assessment of failure.

Teacher efficacy has significant effects on preservice teachers' performance in the class and their preparation to enter the profession. It is important to know preservice teachers' efficacy level because their efficacy level will influence how they teach in the next teaching performance. By knowing their efficacy level, it means that preservice teachers have made judgment about their ability. Thus, they can know what aspects they should improve and what aspect they should maintain. Then, they can start joining teacher professional development (TPD). It is hoped that they will get used to join TPD once they have administered as in-service teachers. Developing and maintaining English skill and pedagogical knowledge for in-service teachers is also important. The

aim is to make the teachers able to follow the change and innovations in second language learning and to answer the developing demands for competent English teachers worldwide (Wulyani, 2017: 1).

2. Methodology

To meet the purposes of the study, mixed-methods research design was used. This study used one of three basic types of mixed-methods research, explanatory sequential mixed methods

The subjects of the study were students of cohort 2015 of English Language Teaching program who have finished the internship program. The participants were chosen with convenience sampling. The participants were 41 English Language Teaching students. There were 35 females and six male students. The participants' identities were changed into pseudonyms for ethical clearance. From 41 participants, six participants participated in the interview. Three of them represented high-efficacious participants and three of them represented low-efficacious teachers.

This study used two research instruments, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire consisted of 12 closed-ended questions and one open-ended question. The closed-ended questions were aimed to measure the preservice teachers' efficacy level and adapted from Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The open-ended question was aimed to know the factors influencing the levels. The questionnaire consisted of three efficacy subtypes. Those are efficacy in instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management. The interview is a follow-up action of the factors influencing the participants' efficacy from the questionnaire. We chose to conduct a semi-structured interview that was conducted in *Bahasa Indonesia* to avoid misunderstanding.

To measure the efficacy level, the data were calculated with SPSS 16 to measure the mean and standard deviation. The mean and standard deviation of each subtype was calculated. Then, the mean and standard deviation for overall efficacy was calculated. The scores range from 1 to 5. The higher the mean indicated the greater the perceived sense of teacher self-efficacy (Pendergast, 2011: 53). The factors influencing the efficacy level were listed. Then, they were grouped based on the efficacy source. For the interview data, the audio recording of the interview was transcribed. The interview data were analyzed by adapting Choi and Lee's technique (2018: 179). We analyzed the interview data by linking them to each participant's questionnaire answers.

3. Findings

Findings from the questionnaire answer the research questions about the participants' efficacy level and factors influencing it. The efficacy level that is discussed covers efficacy in student engagement, instructional strategies, classroom management and the overall efficacy level. The higher the mean indicates the greater the perceived sense of efficacy. The participants had highest efficacy level in instructional strategies (3.41) and lowest efficacy in student engagement (3.16).

Besides the mean of each efficacy subtypes, the findings from the questionnaire also cover the standard deviation of each efficacy subtypes. The higher the standard deviation indicated the more heterogenous the efficacy level. Student engagement had the highest standard deviation score. It indicates that the participants' efficacy level ranged from low to high efficacy level. For instructional strategies, the participants' efficacy level is the most homogeneous. It means that most of the participants believed in the instructional strategies that they have mastered. The mean and the standard deviation were presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: The Efficacy Level of the Respondents

Efficacy Subtypes	Mean	Standard Deviation
Efficacy in Student Engagement	3.16	1.1
Efficacy in Instructional Strategies	3.41	.88
Efficacy in Classroom Management	3.35	.93
Overall Efficacy	3.31	.98

Based on the questionnaire, six influential factors that affect the participants' efficacy were mentioned by the participants. Those six factors were formal teaching practice, informal teaching experience, classroom atmosphere, content course, preparation before teaching and observing teachers' performance. The six factors influenced their efficacy in three subtypes of efficacy. In the questionnaire, they stated why those factors influence their efficacy and how it affected them. Most of them wanted to improve their teaching skill and a few of them did not want to continue teaching in a formal or informal institution. Among those factors, formal teaching practice was most mentioned by the participants. The participants also can know their weaknesses and strength in teaching from that experience.

Seven out of 41 participants mentioned more than one factor that influenced their efficacy. From their responses, each factor influenced their efficacy in different efficacy subtypes. For example, a participant was able to improve her ability in delivering

materials from her experience as a private tutor. Her experience during formal teaching practice could improve her ability in managing the class.

In the interview, the participants gave further explanations about factors influencing their efficacy level. Similar influential factors mentioned by the interviewees were grouped under the same theme. There were six important points gained from the interview. Those are English proficiency, feedback and support from the school environment, personal characteristics, observing other teachers' performance, lacking knowledge and practice about teaching strategy, and lacking passion in teaching. Among those factors, the new factors that had not been mentioned in the questionnaire were English proficiency, personal characteristics, and lack of passion for teaching.

4. Discussions

Among the three efficacy subtypes, the participants have the highest efficacy level (3.41) in instructional strategies. The participants' efficacy level in instructional strategies is homogeneous. It indicates that the participants mostly believe they are capable of designing instructional strategies, providing explanation and assessing students. The lowest efficacy level of the participants is in student engagement (3.16) and their efficacy level is heterogeneous. It means that there are participants who feel highly efficacious and there are participants who feel low efficacious. There is a gap between the participants' efficacy level about their ability in engaging and motivating students during the learning. A possible explanation for this might be because the participants lacked teaching experience.

Out of 5-rating scales, the overall efficacy level of the participants is 3.31. It means that the preservice teachers believe that their ability has some influence on students' improvement. The efficacy level is slightly higher than the mid-point of 3. That level was not good but was not bad either. Their experience in teaching helped them to make realistic self-evaluation toward their ability (Ma & Cavanagh, 2018: 144).

Among all the factors mentioned in the questionnaire and interview, there are four most influential factors of the participants' efficacy level. Those four factors are the participants' experience in a formal and informal teaching practice, feedback and support from the school environment, observing other teachers' performance, and English proficiency. Those factors are analyzed based on Bandura's theory about four sources of efficacy and other relevant studies. Those efficacy sources are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and emotional arousal.

4.1. Formal and Informal Teaching Experience

Experience in formal and informal teaching are the most frequently mentioned factors by the participants. Among 41 participants, 20 participants mentioned formal teaching practice and 13 participants mentioned informal teaching experience as influential factors on their efficacy level. Having a chance to teach in formal and informal situations are beneficial for preservice teachers. Their experience in formal and informal teaching practice help them to get informative knowledge about the tasks they need to complete as teachers, put their teaching knowledge into practice and get to meet students with different characteristics.

Among Bandura's (1997) four sources of efficacy, formal teaching and informal teaching experiences are classified as mastery experiences. Bandura stated that mastery experiences are the most influential factors on efficacy belief. It is because the participants get the first-hand experience of teaching. The successful teaching experiences can boost preservice teachers' efficacy level. However, the unsuccessful experience makes them doubt their teaching ability. It can therefore be assumed that there was a gap between the preservice teachers' expectation and the reality during the actual teaching performance (Pendergast, et al., 2011: 54). In this study, the number of participants who get motivated is higher than those who doubt their ability. This present study confirms that mastery experiences are the most powerful source of efficacy. Most of the participants mentioned mastery experiences as the influential factors.

4.2. Feedback and Support from the School Environment

In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that feedback from teachers and lecturers is needed for preservice teachers. A study by Brown, et al. (2014: 16) revealed the importance of feedback for preservice teachers during formal teaching practice. Guidance from the mentors in every step and feedback from the mentor teachers were components that made the preservice teachers feel well-prepared to enter the profession. Research by Berg & Smith (2018: 538) revealed the similar findings with Brown, et al. (2014). Support from teachers and lecturers for the preservice teachers to experience successful mastery experience in teaching is needed. During formal teaching practice, preservice teachers might be led by their anxiety that made them think they were unable to teach.

These findings are in line with Bandura's theory (1997). Feedback and support from teachers and lecturer are included as social persuasion among four sources of efficacy.

Positive and negative feedback play essential role in building efficacy level. Feedback from trustworthy people can enhance one's efficacy level. The positive appraisal from trustworthy people is proven in this present study can enhance the participants' efficacy. However, the present study is unable to provide the relation between negative appraisal and efficacy level. There was no participant who mentioned about negative appraisal and how it affected them.

4.3. Observing Other Teachers' Performance

Observing other teachers or preservice teachers' performance is one of the factors that influenced the participants' efficacy. This factor is classified as vicarious experiences. Vicarious experience means observing others completing similar task (Bandura, 1997). The successful teaching performance of the people who do similar tasks will increase the preservice teachers' efficacy. However, the failed attempt of those people will decline the preservice teachers' efficacy. From the finding, the present study is unable to show if observing failed attempt from other teachers can lower the preservice teachers' efficacy level.

4.4. English Proficiency

English proficiency is a significant factor to influence teacher or preservice teachers' performance. Preservice teachers should understand the material well so that they do not deliver wrong materials in the class. Two preservice teachers had some issues in English proficiency. Chacón's study (2005) proved that English proficiency has correlation with efficacy level in student engagement and instructional strategies. The higher EFL teachers rate their language skills, the higher the teachers' efficacy level in student engagement and instructional strategies. The teachers feel less efficacious because in analyzing teaching task, the teachers will make judgment about their language skills. If they are less efficacious, they will put less effort to motivate students in learning English (Chacón, 2005: 269). From the findings, the two preservice teachers felt low efficacious in instructional strategies because of their English proficiency. To be able to explain the materials in various ways and answer the students' question requires good English proficiency. For the student engagement, the students will be motivated if the teachers are passionate and proficient in the subject.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

This study was set out to investigate the efficacy level of English Language Teaching students of cohort 2015 of *Universitas Negeri Malang* and the factors influencing their efficacy. The first major findings were about the preservice teachers' efficacy level in instructional strategies, classroom management, student engagement, and the overall efficacy level. This study found that the preservice teachers acquired highest efficacy level in instructional strategies and lowest efficacy level in student engagement. It means that they rated their teaching ability in arranging instructional strategies as good. On the other hand, they rated their teaching ability in motivating and engaging students as low. The preservice teachers' overall efficacy level (3.31) is slightly above the mid-point out of 5 rating scales. The preservice teachers rated their teaching ability after finishing their formal teaching practice. They also had several experience in teaching besides the formal teaching practice. Thus, they made realistic self-evaluation about their teaching ability based on their experience.

The second major findings were about factors influencing the preservice teachers' efficacy level. There are four factors influencing the preservice teachers' efficacy level. Those factors are experiences in formal and informal teaching, feedback and support from the school environment, observing other teachers' performance, and English proficiency. Formal and informal teaching experiences, observing other teachers' performance, and feedback and support from the school are classified into Bandura's four sources of efficacy. Sources of efficacy that can be found in this study are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion. The four sources can affect the preservice teachers' performance in instructional strategies, classroom management and student engagement.

5.1. Suggestions

Based on the conclusion, some suggestions are offered to preservice teachers, in-service teachers, department of English, and future researchers who are interested in this field of study. The first suggestion is for preservice teachers. It is important to have formal and informal teaching experiences because they help them to understand more about teachers' role and build realistic self-evaluation about their teaching ability. They also understand what they have to improve for their teaching. It is also important to keep improving their English proficiency as it is their main responsibility as English teachers. Lacking English proficiency can also affect their performance in arranging instructional

strategies, motivating and engaging students in learning. Thus, it is suggested for them to start participating in teacher professional development (TPD) to develop their teaching skills.

The second suggestion is for in-service teachers who have a chance to be mentor teachers for preservice teachers. It is important to give developing feedback for preservice teachers such as solutions to solve problems in the class and appraisal of what preservice teachers have done well. They help preservice teachers build their efficacy level. It is also important for in-service teachers to participate institutional and individual teacher professional development. The aim is to keep them developing and maintaining their English skill and pedagogical skills. Preservice teachers observe and learn from the in-service teachers' performance as their role models. Moreover, in-service teachers should participate in TPD to follow the change and innovation in second language learning and to answer the developing demands for competent English teachers (Wulyani, 2017: 1).

The third suggestion is for department of English. The department has equipped their students well with content courses and peer teaching before formal teaching practice. Some lecturers monitor and evaluate the students' performance by coming to schools. They also give feedback and support for the students. It is hoped that the department continue giving this preparation for the students. The department can also ask and follow up the students' opinion about their experience in formal teaching practice. Feedback and support after the practice is important to build the students' confidence.

The fourth suggestion is for future researchers. Future researchers are suggested to investigate the participants' efficacy level who participated in this study when they have enrolled as in-service teachers. They can compare the participants' efficacy level before and after college. They can also investigate what efforts the participants have made to enhance their teacher professional development.

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