Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi
The Journal of International Social Research
Volume: 3 Issue: 14 Fall 2010

EDUCATOR'S SENSE OF EFFICACY IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING IN MALAYSIAN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

This study focused on the educator's sense of efficacy in three Malaysian private higher institutions. This study examined whether there is any difference in the educator's sense of efficacy in teaching international and Malaysian students. It also investigates the teacher sense of efficacy in relation to age, years of teaching experience and level of education. The study was conducted by using the teacher sense of efficacy scale by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). The sample consisted of 59 lecturers from Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication. The results showed that there are significant positive correlations in teacher's sense of efficacy in relation to age (r=.277, $p < 0.05$), years of teaching experience (r=.287, $p<0.05$) and level of education (r_s=.284, $p>0.05$). There are significant differences in teaching Malaysian students and International students in relation to efficacy for instructional strategies (t=-2.963, $p<0.05$), efficacy for classroom management (t=2.531,$p<0.05$) and efficacy for student engagement (t= -2.825, <0.05). The implication of the teachers' sense of efficacy was discussed.

Key Words: Context of Teaching, Educator's Sense of Efficacy.

Introduction

Higher education occupies a major place in society and a large number of people devote their lives to do teaching in a wide variety of higher educational setting such as colleges, polytechnics, college universities, universities and some other settings. In Malaysia, private higher education had undergone some major evaluations, particularly during the currency downturn or known as the Asian financial crisis – 1997. Due to the Asian financial crisis, Malaysian private higher education institutions have established a marketplace in the countries in the region (Mei, T.A, 2002). This brought the internationalization of Higher Education and it is one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalization (Singh, 2008). Internationalization is the process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service of an institution (Source: National Private Higher Education Conference, 2008) which it is rapidly propelling into a choice destination for international students to study in the region. YAB Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak (2007), the Prime Minister of Malaysia, has highlighted internationalization provides high quality education within the country, in a cost-effective manner for our own young people whilst attracting international students to our shores, as part of the educational offerings of Malaysia. Therefore, the number of international students is increasing over the years, from 2002 to 2008. Based on the statistics provided by Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, the number of international students enrolled in Private Higher Education in 2008 was 50,679. Out of 50,679 international students, 10,738 students are from the Middle East and North African countries. This is because these countries are linked to Malaysia in terms of political ideology and the

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Islamic religious faith (Mei, T.A. 2002). With the great number of international students in Malaysian Private Higher Education, this has highlighted the educator's sense of efficacy in teaching the international students. Carroll and Ryan (2005) claimed that many lecturers held misconceptions about the international students and viewed them as homogenous group with similar learning styles and expectations; as rote learners with a surface approach to learning; as unwilling to participate in class discussion; and as only wanting to interact with others from similar background. This false impression or assumption might shape the educator's sense of efficacy in teaching the international students, which it could be different in teaching local students. As Woolfok- Hoy & Tshannen-Moran (2001) defined teacher efficacy as teachers' belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or not keen in learning.

The main aim of this research is to determine educator's sense of efficacy in teaching Malaysian students and International students. This study addresses the following research questions: (1) Does the educator's sense of efficacy relate to demographic profile (age, level of education and years of teaching experience)? (2) Is there a difference between the educator's sense of efficacy for instructional strategies in teaching Malaysian students and International students? (3) Is there a difference between the educator's sense of efficacy for classroom management in teaching Malaysian students and International students? (4) Is there a difference between the educator's sense of efficacy for student engagement in teaching Malaysian students and International students?

Theoretical Framework and Related Literature

Based on Bandura's model of expectation efficacy (1977, 1997) there were four sources of teacher efficacy, which were mastery experience, verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences and physiological arousal.

Mastery experience, is the influential source of efficacy information because it is based on personal mastery experiences. The second source of teacher efficacy expectation as suggested by Bandura's model is vicarious learning experience. According to Bandura (1977), people do not rely on experienced mastery as the sole source of information concerning their level of self-efficacy, many expectations are derived from vicarious experience. For instance, watching others teach, whether from the vantage point of a student or from images portrayed in the media, provides impressions about the nature of the teaching task and its context (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, Hoy, 1998). Thus, it can affect the observers' personal teaching competence (p 19). The third source is verbal persuasion. It can be general and specific; it also can provide information about the nature of teaching, give encouragement and strategies for overcoming situational obstacles, and provide specific feedback about a teacher's performance (Tschannen- Moran, Woolfolk & Hoy, 1998). Physiological arousal is the last source of efficacy information projected by Bandura (1977, 1997). The level of physiological arousal a person experiences in teaching situation adds to self- perceptions of teaching competence (Tschannen- Moran, Woolfolk & Hoy, 1998).

Although Bandura postulated the four major sources of efficacy information in teachers, teachers do not feel equally for all teaching situations. They may feel very competent in one area of study or when working with one kind of student and feel less able in other subject or with different students (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, & Hoy, 1998, 2001). Thus, cognitive processing should be taken into account as it determines how the sources of information will be weighted and how they will influence the analysis of the teaching task, its context, and the assessment of personal teaching competence, which the interaction between them, in turn, shapes teacher efficacy (Tschannen- Moran, Woolfolk & Hoy, 1998).

A study conducted by Chocon (2005) on English teacher efficacy belief in Venezuela showed that the subjects perceived themselves more capable in designing instructional strategies, providing explanations, and assessing students as well as in managing student behavior. In Malaysia, R. Murshidi et.al (2005) found that the fresh graduate teachers also judged themselves more efficacious in instructional strategies than classroom management and student engagement. According to Yeo, Rebecca, Chong, Vivian and Quek (2008) efficacious teachers claim to devise and modify instructional strategies to meet students' needs. Gibson and Dembo (1984) reported that the high efficacy teacher allocated twice the amount of time to whole class instruction, spend more time monitoring and facilitating the students than the low-efficacy teacher.

Research Methods and Procedures

This is a descriptive study on the population of 70 lecturers from Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication in three higher education institutions in Selangor. Only 59 of 70 lecturers were selected as sample using the formula by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Purposive and convenient sampling were used to select the subjects. Two key informants were selected by purposive sampling. The key informants: (1) must be the lecturers from Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, who are teaching in Malaysian private Higher Education Institutions; (2) must have both Malaysian and International students in their classes. Data were collected using a questionnaire.

The questionnaire was developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). It consists of 24 items, assessed along a 9-point Likert-scale with the anchors at (1) Nothing, (3) Very Little, (5) Some Influence, (7) Quite A Bit, (9) A Great Deal. The choice of (1) means that the respondents cannot do anything regarding the items, while a choice of (9) means the respondents are able to do "A great deal" to the corresponding items. The scale includes three subscales with eight items each: Efficacy for Instructional Strategies, Efficacy for Student Engagement and Efficacy for Classroom Management. The questionnaire was pilot tested on 30 subjects and the selection of the pilot subjects was based on the sample characteristics of the main study. The questionnaire was administered at the lecturers' work sites. The lecturers were given a week to complete the questionnaire and placed the questionnaire into the letter-size return envelope, which they could seal. The data were then collected by the researcher personally from the respective institutions. The data were analysed using SPSS to obtain percentages, mean, standard deviation and frequency. Correlation analysis and independent sample *t*- test were also performed.

Findings

Demographic Background of Respondents

Of the 59 respondents in table 1, 20 male and 39 female lecturers participated in the research. Most of the participants were in the age group of 21 – 30 years old. Besides that, most of them have been teaching in the respective institutions for at least 1 to 10 years. As for the level of education, 27 are Bachelor's degree holder, 27 are Master's degree holder and 5 are PhD's holder.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution and Percentages Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Educators (*N*=59)	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	29	34
Female	30	66
Age		
20-30	35	59.3
31-40	19	30.5
41-50	3	6.8
51-60	2	3.4
Years of Teaching Experience		
1-10	50	84.7
11-20	7	11.9
21-40	2	3.4
Level of Education		
Bachelor Degree	27	45.8
Master Degree	27	45.8
PhD	5	8.5

Descriptive statistics of Teacher's sense of Efficacy Scales in teaching international and Malaysian students

Table 2 shows, the means of the three subscaleswhich indicate that generally the lecturers from three private higher educational institutions rated themselves relatively more efficacious in instructional strategies than managing classroom and engaging students interactively. Besides that, the total means scores for each subscale item revealed that the lecturers feel more confident in teaching Malaysian students rather than international students.

Table 2: Means and standard deviations of teachers' sense of efficacy in teaching International and Malaysian students

Items	Efficacy subscales	Teaching Group			
		International students (*N*=59)		Malaysian students (*N*=59)	
		Means *(M)*	Standard Deviation *(SD)*	Means *(M)*	Standard Deviation *(SD)*
Efficacy for instructional strategies					
(7)	How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	6.92	1.47	7.69	1.21
(10)	How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	6.80	1.26	7.34	1.27
(11)	To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	6.80	1.42	7.59	1.15
(17)	How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level of individual students?	6.63	1.40	7.31	1.39
(18)	How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	6.76	1.42	7.34	1.32
(20)	To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	7.15	1.39	7.61	1.13
(23)	How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	6.80	1.39	7.46	1.33
(24)	How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	7.07	1.43	7.46	1.38
Total		***6.86***	***1.17***	***7.47***	***1.07***
Efficacy for classroom management					
(3)	How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	6.90	1.57	7.42	1.24
(5)	To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	6.80	1.50	7.42	1.22
(8)	How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	7.07	1.35	7.54	1.16
(13)	How much can you do to get student to follow classroom rules?	6.97	1.36	7.44	1.19
(15)	How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	6.61	1.49	7.44	1.26
(16)	How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	6.69	1.33	7.27	1.32
(19)	How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	6.83	1.45	7.31	1.43
(21)	How well can you respond to defiant students?	6.98	1.32	7.29	1.31
Total		***6.85***	***1.20***	***7.39***	***1.09***
Efficacy for student engagement					
(1)	How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	6.47	1.67	7.29	1.16
(2)	How much can you do to help your students think critically?	6.63	1.69	7.44	1.26
(4)	How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in course work?	6.86	1.54	7.46	1.21

(6)	How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in course work?	6.88	1.51	7.46	1.18
(9)	How much can you do to help your students value learning?	6.85	1.38	7.39	1.30
(12)	How much can you do to foster student creativity?	6.59	1.50	7.41	1.39
(14)	How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	6.49	1.49	7.20	1.45
(22)	How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in college?	6.31	1.94	6.59	1.98
Total		***6.64***	***1.34***	***7.28***	***1.13***

From the observation of the efficacy for instructional strategies result, it shows that the lecturers judged their efficacy of using the effective instructional strategies in teaching Malaysian students to be slightly higher than teaching the international students. As from the table above, the lecturers have the confidence that they can respond to difficult questions well (*M=7.69*) rather than teaching the international students (*M=6.92*). Nevertheless, as for the efficacy for classroom management, the result shows that the lecturers are relatively more efficacious in disciplining and controlling the Malaysian students than international students. For instance, the lecturers feel more confident in establishing routines to keep activities running smoothly in teaching Malaysian students (*M=7.54*) compared to teaching international students (*M=7.07*). However, the lecturers feel relatively less efficacious in managing both Malaysian and international students in responding to the disobedient students in the classroom (*M=7.29* and *M=6.98* respectively). As for the efficacy for student engagement, the result indicates that the lecturers judged their efficacy of engaging the Malaysian students interactively as slightly higher than engaging the international students interactively. For example, the lecturers feel more efficacious in fostering creativity skills when teaching Malaysian students (*M=7.41*) than teaching the international students (*M=6.59*). Nevertheless, the lecturers feel relatively less efficacious in engaging both Malaysian and international students in cooperating with the students' family in improving their academic achievement (*M=6.59* and *M=6.31* respectively). This suggests that the lecturers cannot do much for their students outside the classroom learning.

Relationship between demographic variables and Teacher's Sense of Efficacy scales (TSES)

The results shown in Table 3 and table 4 indicated that there are significant correlations in overall teacher sense of efficacy between all the three demographic variables (age, level of education and years of teaching experience).

Table 3: The results of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient between Teacher's sense of efficacy and demographic variables

		Age	Years of Teaching experience
TSES	Pearson Correlation	.277*	.287*
	Significant (2-tailed)	.034	.028
	N	59	59

Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4: The results Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between Teacher's sense of efficacy and demographic variables

			level of education	TSES
Spearman's rho	level of education	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.284*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.029
		N	59	59

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results show positive and significant correlations between TSES and age (r=.277, p<0.05), years of teaching experience (r=.287, p<0.05) and level of education (r_s=.284, p>0.05). The results also suggest that

the increasing of age and years of teaching experience and higher education qualifications are related to the educators' sense of efficacy in their ability to teach in any context and group of students.

Comparison of the Instructional Strategies in teaching International students and Malaysian students

Table 5 shows the mean scores of efficacy for instructional strategies and table 5.1 indicated that there are significant difference in efficacy for instructional strategies in teaching International students and Malaysian students.

Table 5: Mean Scores of Efficacy for Instructional Strategies in teaching International and Malaysian students

	Teaching Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Instructional Strategies	International Students	59	6.86	1.17
	Malaysian Students	59	7.47	1.07

Table 5.1: Independent Sample *t*-test of Efficacy for Instructional Strategies in teaching International and Malaysian students

		Levene's test for Equality of variance		*t*-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Instructional Strategies	Equal variances assumed	.067	.796	-2.963	116	.004

Based on the result above, there is a significant difference in mean score (t = -2.963, p< 0.05) of efficacy for instructional strategies. Thus, the result suggests that the lecturers perceived that they can do more and better instructional strategies when teaching Malaysian students compared to International students.

Comparison of the Classroom Management in teaching International students and Malaysian students

Table 6 shows the mean scores of efficacy for classroom management and table 6.1 indicated that there are significant differences in efficacy for classroom management in teaching International students and Malaysian students.

Table 6: Mean Scores of Efficacy for Classroom Management in teaching International and Malaysian students

	Teaching Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Classroom Management	International Students	59	6.85	1.20
	Malaysian Students	59	7.39	1.09

Table 6.1: Independent Sample *t*-test of Efficacy for Classroom Management in teaching International and Malaysian students

		Levene's test for Equality of variance		*t*-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Classroom Management	Equal variances assumed	.177	.675	-2.531	116	.013

Based on the result above, there is a significant difference in mean score (t = -2.531, p< 0.05) of efficacy for classroom management. Thus, the result suggests that the lecturers apparently believe that they can manage and discipline Malaysian students better than International students.

Comparison of the Student Engagement in teaching International students and Malaysian students

Table 7 shows the mean scores of efficacy for student engagement and table 7.1 indicated that there are significant differences in efficacy for student engagement in teaching International and Malaysian students.

Table 7: Mean Scores of Efficacy for Student Engagement in teaching International and Malaysian students

	Teaching Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Student engagement	International Students	59	6.63	1.34
	Malaysian Students	59	7.28	1.13

Table 7.1: Independent Sample *t*-test of Efficacy for Student Engagement in teaching International and Malaysian students

		Levene's test for Equality of variance		*t*-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Student Engagement	Equal variances assumed	.321	.572	-2.825	116	.006

Based on the result above, there is a statistically significant difference in mean score (t = -2.825, p< 0.05) of efficacy for student engagement. Thus, the result suggests that the lecturers claimed that they are more confident in engaging Malaysian students interactively such as motivate the weaker students; inculcate all the positive learning values compared to International students.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the present study, the result showed that there is statistically significant positive correlations between year of teaching experience, age and teacher efficacy. As Yeo, Rebecca, Chong, Vivian and Quek (2008) research in which they found teachers with more teaching experience have greater sense of teacher efficacy in the area of instructional strategies, student engagement and classroom management and teachers with five or more years teaching experience also reported stronger efficacy judgments relating to classroom management compared to the novice teachers. In the relation between level of education and educator's sense of efficacy, the result indicated that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between them. This finding is similar to the result reported by Deborah et.al (2000) which indicated that those who earned a masters degree tended to show higher means in all efficacy measures than those with a bachelor degree.

Moreover, the results showed that most of the respondents perceived themselves as having relatively low efficacy for engaging Malaysian and International students in learning compared to the other two factors – efficacy for instructional strategies and classroom management. This could be explained by the presence of technology, educators have been left on their own to use their creativity and strength of personality to cultivate strategies for encouraging and engaging the students in classroom learning. The second possibility is that most of the educators spend more time on instruction and management and they often dominate the time and thoughts of the educators, especially the novice lecturers (Meister & Melnick, 2003).

Interestingly, most of the lecturers feel more confident in teaching Malaysian students rather than international students. One of the possible explanations is that the educators perceived the international students as homogenous groups, sharing the similar style of learning, who are considered lacking faith in the student's ability to achieve, thus, they are likely to have low academic expectations for the students (Villegas and Lucas, 2007). Further, many of the educators have misconception about the international students and view them as problematic students who are not capable learners like the local students.

Teacher self-efficacy is a little idea with big impact. Teachers' judgment of their capability to impact students' outcomes has been consistently related to teacher behavior, student attitudes and student achievement. In conclusion, this study has revealed that the educators have relatively low efficacy in teaching international students compared to Malaysian students. This is to raise educators' awareness that they are competent in teaching Malaysian students, yet they lack the confidence in teaching the international students. Thus, it is also implied to the human resources department of private higher learning institutions to provide short training courses or seminars in order to help the educators (pre-service, novice or experienced teachers) to stay in their profession in professionally and committed teaching industries. Besides that, they should provide short term training courses or seminars in order to prepare the educators to be cultural responsive teachers. Nevertheless, the educators need to understand their students' cultural background in order to create conducive learning environment, as well as establish the educator's sense of efficacy in teaching International students.

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