



Exploring the Relationship between EFL Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Teacher Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

This study was a quantitative one that aimed at examining any probable relationship between two fundamental constructs in the area of language pedagogy. These constructs were EFL teacher's self-efficacy and teacher empowerment. The participants of this study were 80 female and male language EFL teachers who were working at ten language institutes in Shiraz, Marvdasht and Zarghan. They were selected via convenience sampling method due to some restrictions. The study was conducted utilizing two questionnaires. There was an efficacy scale by of Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) and an empowerment questionnaire by Short and Rienhart (1992). To obtain the result, the researchers run Pearson Correlation. The result showed a significant correlation between the two constructs at 0.05.

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Introduction

Teacher empowerment can be regarded as a process through which teachers develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and from it are able to address or resolve their own problems by developing mechanism to do so. On the other hand, an empowered teacher is said to have the skills and knowledge to act on a situation appropriately and improves it in a positive way. However, for this to be realized school setting should provide opportunities for development and a display of competence in handling diverse situations making teachers to be central in this process.

Many scholars have given various definitions for teacher efficacy throughout its lifetime, but its main meaning is teacher's perception of her capabilities in achieving the goals of education. Social-cognitive theory, has provided many definitions for the term been repeatedly investigated regarding its ties with other teacher variables. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory proposed that teachers are able to self-regulate cognitive processes and behaviors, rather than simply react to events.

Bandura asserted that self-efficacy is a mechanism of behavioral change and self-regulation. It has been stated that the organization and execution of certain actions involve a thinking process that individuals perform prior to their activities. Bandura (1986, 1997) uttered that behavior is more efficiently predicted by the individuals' belief regarding their capabilities rather than what they are actually capable of doing. Thus this viewpoint can be regarded as a driving force behind any individual's action that leads to different activities.

Tschannen Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy (1998) identified teacher efficacy as a teacher's judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student involvement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unenthusiastic. Dellinger, Bobbett, Olivier, & Ellett (2008), have also distinguished between teachers' efficacy and teachers' beliefs.

Referring to different studies (e.g., Tschannen Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), they define teachers' efficacy as teachers' beliefs in their abilities to affect student performance. They asserted that teachers' efficacy overlooks the unique and critical role played by teachers' beliefs in their ability to perform the wide range of teaching tasks required in various teaching and learning milieus.

Previous researches suggested powerful effects from the simple idea that a teacher's belief in his or her ability to positively impact student learning is critical to actual success or failure in a teacher's behavior" (Henson, 2001). On the other hand, some scholars believe that the more precise term "teacher sense of efficacy" must be used, as what is being discussed is a teacher's sense of competence, not some objective measure of actual competence.

Many researches have proven a direct relation between teachers' empowerment and their sense of self-efficacy. These researches showed that effective teaching requires teachers to possess good knowledge of subject matter, high realistic goals, clear standards for classroom behavior, and positive interactions with their students through gaining power over what they need to do, becoming aware of their limitations and potentials, and trying to improve their effectiveness. This way a teacher can hire appropriate pedagogical methods to meet students' needs; to be able to monitor students' progress and to provide feedback and opportunities for students to apply what they have learned.

Considering the fact that these two constructs affect educational outcomes drastically, the present study intended to explore the relationship between teachers self-efficacy and teacher empowerment. To this end, the following research question and hypothesis were proposed.

Research Question

1. Is there any significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teacher empowerment?

Research Hypothesis

1. There is no relationship between teacher efficacy and their empowerment.

Literature review

Teacher Empowerment

The evolution of the "empowerment" as a construct in pedagogy began with the human relations movement, which focused attention on the teacher and his or her interactions with other teachers (Short & Greer, 1997). During the last years, the construct of empowerment has been defined by many educational researchers. For instance, Lightfoot (1996) defined teacher empowerment as a person's opportunities for autonomy, responsibility, choice, and authority. Maeroff (1998) stated that "teachers' empowerment" requires autonomy, recognition, opportunities for increasing knowledge, and access to decision making.

Teacher empowerment has become increasingly visible within current trends related to educational best practices. The empowerment of teachers serves as a significant factor in the success of the schools. Teacher empowerment and teachers' sense of empowerment represent important variables in comprehensive school improvement efforts of today's effective schools movement. Teachers are the most influential person to make decisions concerning teaching and learning, so it is necessary to examine the conditions that will ensure that teachers are able to effectively perform their jobs (Hirsch et al., 2006a, 2006b; Wan, 2005).

Wynne (2001) asserted that the aim of teacher empowerment is to improve students' achievement. There have been six dimensions devoted to teacher empowerment. They are decision making, autonomy, professional growth, impact, status, and self-efficacy (Short, 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992).

"Decision making" refers to the participation of teachers' in important decisions that directly affect their professional lives. Such participation is essential if teachers are to increase control over their working environment, increase their internal locus of control, and decrease feelings of alienation at the working place. "Autonomy" refers to teachers' believing that they have control over various aspects of their working life, including scheduling, curriculum development, selection of textbooks and planning instruction. Autonomy is directly related to decision making. The third dimension which is "*professional growth*" refers to teachers' perception that the school provides them opportunities to grow and develop professionally, to continue to learn, and to expand their skills during their work in school.

Another dimension of teacher empowerment is the "impact" which refers to the teacher's need to have an influence on the teaching and learning process in which they want to be appreciated that they are positively affecting the teaching and learning process. "Status" refers to the professional respect that teachers receive from colleagues. It is when colleagues acknowledge their expertise. And finally, "Self-efficacy" refers to the teachers believing that they have the skills to perform the job, and are competent to develop curricula for the learners. The feeling of mastery, in both knowledge and practice, those results in accomplishing desired outcomes is critical in the teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

When teachers are provided opportunities to collaborate and share information, respectful relationships are developed and leadership capacity within the school is enhanced. Teachers need to make decisions and become more involved

in their schools, as teacher empowerment has become an important factor due to school reform (Coble 2011).

Teacher Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy as a concept in pedagogy was first developed in 1986 by Bandura (1994) who defined it as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (p.71). Self-efficacy also was defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required producing given attainment" (Bandura, 1997, p.3). It can be developed by four main sources of influence. Bandura (1997) specified these sources of efficacy as: mastery experience, also called enactive self-mastery, vicarious experience, also called role-modeling, social or verbal persuasion, and arousal or physiological and emotional states.

Enactive mastery experiences regarded as the first source is the most influential one and is comprised of all successes that a learner has experienced in specific environment. A learner's frequent successes, especially those obtained with overcoming adversity build robust self-efficacy beliefs that match abilities to better control events (Bandura, 1997). The second source vicarious experiences are accomplished via observation of events that have modeled by others. They enable the learner to appreciate his own capabilities in relation to the attainments of others (Bandura, 1997).

Social or verbal persuasion is the third source. Successful persuaders facilitate learners' beliefs in their capabilities; while simultaneously ascertain that the visualized success is achievable. On the other hand, negative persuasion, tend to defeat and decrease self-beliefs. The most contributing effect of social persuasion dominates initiating the task, attempting new strategies, and trying hard to succeed (Pajares, 2002). And the last source, Psychological and affective states, such as stress, anxiety, and excitement also provide data about efficacy perception and enhance the feeling of proficiency. However, trying to reduce a learner's stress and anxiety and modify negative states to positive facilitative states plays an important role in amending perceived self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura (1986, p. 311) proposed that "student teachers who visualize success scenarios when confronted with challenging instances in their teaching, also project a greater sense of optimism in their belief that they can generate plausible and effective solutions". "Low self-efficacious student teachers are more likely to visualize failure scenarios and their performance is impaired by their focus on what went wrong, or will go wrong" (Bandura 1986, 362). Gibbs (1999) also cited in Trentham, Silvern, & Brogdon (1995) who believed that people with strong self-efficacy are more satisfied with their job and demonstrate more commitment. He continued to cite Gibson & Dembo (1994) who asserted that teachers who have high self-efficacy tend to persist in failure situations and use new teaching approaches.

Self-efficacy has been defined with different terminologies throughout its lifetime, but its kernel is teacher's perception of his/her capabilities in achieving the goals of education. Based on social-cognitive theory, teachers' self-efficacy has been examined regarding its connections with other teacher variables. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory indicated that learners are able to self-regulate their cognitive processes and behaviors, rather than simply react to events.

This control is likely to make a change in learners' subsequent actions and behaviors. Self-efficacy as a mechanism of behavioral change and self-regulation has also been examined by Bandura (1986) in his social cognitive theory. The organization and execution of certain actions involves a thinking process that learners as agents perform prior to their activities. Bandura (1986, 1997) also mentioned that behavior is more efficiently predicted by the learners' belief regarding their capabilities rather than what they are actually capable of doing. Thus, this belief can be considered as a driving force behind any learner's action that leads to different activities. Tschannen and Hoy (1998) also defined teachers' efficacy as a teacher's judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of the students' involvement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unenthusiastic.

Studies on the Teacher Empowerment and Teacher Self-efficacy

Short et al. (1992) examined 257 teachers' from six states and eight schools about empowerment and school climate and gained different responses. The findings showed that a negative correlation existed between the empowerment measure and the school climate measure. It was also suggested that as teachers are empowered they should also be sensitized to conflict resolution and group processes. The study proved that teachers become more empowered, when they assume ownership of problem framing and problem solving making them more critical of school functioning and school processes.

Pearson and Moomaw (2005) investigated the relationship between teachers' autonomy and on-the-job stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. The outcomes demonstrated that as general teacher autonomy increased so did empowerment and professionalism. Also, as job satisfaction, perceived empowerment, and professionalism increased, on-the-job stress decreased, and greater job satisfaction was associated with a high degree of professionalism and empowerment.

Empowerment has also been known as a basic factor in successful school reform. Lightfoot (1986) defined empowerment as a chance to practice autonomy, responsibility, choice, and authority. Hence, the review of literature indicates that principals' effective use of leader power can empower schools' teachers. Hobbs and Moreland (2009) conducted a case study to explore the sharing of power between high school principals and teachers. They collected data through a series of interviews, with principals being asked about several components of the school: vision, mission, environment, and improvement strategies.

The outcomes led to a four-step process of the sharing of power between the principal and teacher: (a) willfully sharing, (b) principals' vision implemented, (c) negotiation, and (d) roles united between principal and teacher, with each step working together to empower faculty. The willful sharing of power happens when the principal expands the foundation of distribution of power among the faculty. Thus, they take ownership in the vision through the negotiation of what and how the vision can be attained. Following this approach, the principal becomes more of a team member, with everyone working toward the same outcome and teachers are empowered to have input and affect decisions that are made within their school. This process was utilized to bring stability back to the school through involving all members and making them accountable for their actions.

Hobbs and Moreland (2009) specified six dimensions of empowerment identified by Short and Rinehart (1992) that include: "decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact".

Autonomy was identified as a weak construct that required time to be developed in order to make decisions. Decision making had an immediate effect on teacher empowerment. As teachers acquire more experience and knowledge, their level of self-efficacy increases and they build confidence in the decision making processes. In addition, in their qualitative research study on teachers' empowerment and principals that empower, Blasé and Blasé (2001) collected data from 285 teachers among elementary, middle, and high schools. These schools were practicing a shared governance model focused around the League of Professional Schools. The instrument utilized to collect data was an open-ended questionnaire asking teachers to supply information about how their principal empowered them and to provide an example of what took place for the empowerment to occur.

The results of the study showed that principals should encourage independence by enabling

teachers to make decisions about their curriculum materials, increase innovation by allowing teachers to provide experiments with students, and permit the use of a variety of materials within the classroom. Therefore, these leadership practices would empower teachers to make decisions that influence their classroom. More ever, teachers asserted that trust in their professional knowledge and judgment was needed to be successful. Thus, principals need to trust their teachers to perform the work necessary to allow students to be more successful.

Furthermore, the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) is an instrument that has been used in a variety of educational studies to explore the relationship between teachers and other organizational variables. In this vein, several studies have examined teachers' empowerment and principal use of power (Coble, 2011; Hemric, Schools, Boone, Boiling Springs, & Shellman, 2010). Bogler and Somech (2004) investigated the relationship between organizational commitment, professional commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior, while determining that teacher empowerment was positively related to individual and organizational variables.

The results of some studies revealed that each component impacted school outcomes. Specifically, the study linked professional growth to organizational commitment and self-efficacy, while linking status to organizational and professional commitment, as well as decision making, self-efficacy, and status to organizational citizenship behavior. In their ex-post facto research, Scribner, Truell, Hager, & Srichai (2001) hired the SPES to examine teachers' empowerment within their career and technical education. Data were collected from 3,366 teachers. The results proved that teachers' empowerment was equivalent among male and female and that meaningful decision making was significant for school improvement to occur.

Short and Rinehart (1992) examined the relationships of the perceptions of the teachers in the area of empowerment. Data were collected from 35 recovery reading teacher leaders, 141 reading recovery teachers and 71 non-reading recovery teachers. Data were collected via a survey identifying six dimensions of teacher empowerment: decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and

impact. Short and Rinehart (1992) defined empowerment as school faculty taking responsibility to solve their own problems. Findings suggested that schools where teachers were empowered had a higher level of job satisfaction. They recommended that policy makers should consider the reform they introduce, as it takes time to restructure the thinking of teachers in making decisions. Decision making is a vital area of empowerment.

Several studies have also established that teachers with a strong sense of efficacy tend to exhibit greater levels of planning, organization, and enthusiasm (Vaezi and Fallah, 2011). Tabatabaee Yazdi, Motallebzadeh, and Ashraf (2013) in a qualitative mixed research investigated the relation between self-efficacy of Iranian English as foreign language (EFL) teachers and their reports of burnout comparing two big provinces of Tehran and Khorasan Razavi. The findings revealed that the participants' self-efficacy had a reverse relationship with their burnout. Additionally, a significant relationship was observed between teachers' age, gender, years of experiences and reports of burnout.

A research by Hemric et al. (2010) showed the perceived level of self-efficacy in elementary teachers. The data suggested that principals who provide teachers with control over conditions that impact their work life will enhance trust, professionalism, collegiality, and collaborations among faculty, which may give teachers opportunities to build self-efficacy.

Research Methodology

Participants

The researcher conducted the study with 80 male and female EFL teachers working in language institutes. The sampling method of the participants' selection was convenient sampling. The researcher intended to do a random sampling, but it was not possible to do it because of some limitations. However, the researcher randomly selected 10 language institutes in Marvdasht, Zarghan and Shiraz.

Instruments

To conduct the study, two questionnaires were used. An empowerment questionnaire that was used by the researcher to discover if participants did anything for their empowerment and how they did it and an efficacy questionnaire to check teachers' efficacy.

Teacher empowerment Questionnaire

The first questionnaire was teacher empowerment instrument. It developed by Short and Rinehart (1992). It has 38-item on a 5-point scale that scored from 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree that asked participants to describe how they felt about responsibility, participation, teacher selection, fiscal involvement, professionalism, student learning, empowerment, difference making, control, innovation, and collaboration in their schools. The questionnaire was entitled the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES). Short and Rinehart (1992) reported that "components of empowerment represented in the item's content include: knowledgebase, competence, status, influence, autonomy, control, responsibility, collaboration, involvement in decision making, impact, and choice" (p.954). The SPES had an overall internal consistency of .94

Teachers' Self-efficacy Questionnaire

Teaching self-efficacy was assessed using the short form of Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES). The scale is divided into three subscales: Efficacy for Instructional Strategies (e.g.,

"To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?"), Efficacy for Classroom Management (e.g., "How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?"), and Efficacy for Student Engagement ("How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?"). Using second order factor analyses, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001, 2007) found that items used in the subscales of the TSES had high loadings on a single factor, indicating that the total scale measures an underlying and more general teaching self-efficacy.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the short form has been reported to be .90, with reliabilities of the three subscales ranging from .81 to .86 (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Researchers have additionally found evidence of the scale's general validity across a variety of cultural settings (Klassen, Bong, Usher, Chong, Huan, Wong, & Georgiou, 2009). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha for the full scale was .87. Reliabilities of the Efficacy for Instructional Strategies, Efficacy for Classroom Management, and Efficacy for Student Engagement subscales were .77, .87, and .82, respectively. The reliability of the scale in this study was measured and it was .75 which is an acceptable value.

Data Collection Procedures

The first stage of the study began with the selection of the participants. The researcher attempted to persuade some male and female language teachers occupied in different language centers in Shiraz, Marvdasht and Zarghan to attend the study. This way, the external validity and thus, the generalizability of the study was accredited to some extents. After the selection of the participants and talking to them about the aims of the study, she gave the questionnaires to the participants. The participants filled out the questionnaires and returned them in a two week time restriction. After gathering all the questionnaires the researcher analyzed the obtained data to be able to answer the research questions.

Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 21. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum) were obtained for the variables. Pearson product-moment correlation was also used to investigate the relationship between the EFL learners' level of self-efficacy and teacher empowerment.

Research Findings

Descriptive statistics

The following Table 1 provides descriptive statistics about all the participants with respect to empowerment and efficacy. It shows participants' mean score, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores on the variables. It shows that participants' mean score on empowerment was 1.181 and their standard deviation was 14.2. Their mean score on efficacy was 38.91 and their standard deviation 6.4.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teacher Empowerment	80	88.00	158.00	1.18	14.23531
Teacher Efficacy	80	23.00	50.00	38.91	6.47721
Valid N (listwise)	80				

Inferential statistics

The research hypothesis of the present study proposed that there was not any significant relationship between Iranian EFL teacher efficacy and teacher empowerment.

To reject or retain this hypothesis, the researcher calculated the Pearson correlation between Iranian EFL teacher efficacy and their empowerment to find out if there is a relationship between them. Tables 2 depicted the results.

Table 2. Pearson correlation of teacher efficacy and reflection.

		Teacher Empowerment	Teacher Efficacy
Teacher Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	.344*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.042
	N	80	80
Teacher Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.228*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.042	
	N	80	80

As presented in Table 2, the correlation coefficient was .344 and the p -value (.042) which was less than 0.05 indicating that there was a statistically significant relationship between Iranian EFL teacher efficacy and their empowerment.

Discussion

The present study aimed at finding out any probable relationship between teachers' efficacy and their empowerment. To find the answer of this question, the researcher benefited from Pearson Correlation once more. At the end of the data analyses, the findings showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' efficacy and their empowerment. Therefore, the answer to the second research question is also "yes". The findings of shown that the correlation between teacher efficacy and their empowerment was .34. which is a statistically significant correlation between teacher efficacy and their empowerment.

The outcomes confirm Spritzer's (1995) findings who investigated the correlation of teachers' empowerment and the effectiveness of their teaching. It was revealed that there was a positive correlation between teachers' empowerment and the effectiveness of their teaching. Thus, the hypothesis that stated: there is not any relationship between teacher efficacy and empowerment' is rejected.

Bandura 1986 asserts that teachers with a strong sense of efficacy tend to spend more time planning, designing, and organizing what they teach. They are open to new ideas, willing to try new strategies, set high goals, and persist through setbacks and times of change (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). For teachers, the ability to make judgments, work to a set of principles, take the initiative, self-evaluate and be accountable to students and stakeholders are all dependent on being effective as human agents. The exercise of personal agency is obtained through reflective and regulative thought, the skills at one's command, and other tools of self-influence that affect choice and support selected courses of action. Self-generated influences operate deterministically on behavior in the same way as external sources of influence do (Bandura, 1989).

It is also believed that empowerment allows teachers to release their power. It does not give them power, knowledge, and inspiration they already possess. It enables teachers to influence their school, which differs from power. Studies identified professional outcomes as teacher empowerment increases: Effectiveness (Short & Rinehart, 1992; Spreitzer, 1995), Job satisfaction (Coble, 2011; Short & Rinehart,

1992), Morale (Coble, 2011), and Improvements (Coble, 2011).

Thus, both constructs are regarded as essential factors that affect both teacher and students performance. In educational contexts, the positive relationship between the two can help improve the quality of education and lead to a more powerful teachers which in turn can affect the students educational accomplishment.

Implications of the Study

The first phase of the results of the present study revealed that there were significant relationship between teachers' efficacy and their empowerment. Thus, teachers and educational managers should pay attention to the fact that there exists a direct, significant relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their empowerment. Therefore, this fact needs more attention both from teachers' and teaching organizers to work on these constructs to empower them.

Ideas for Further Research

This study was done to examine the probable relationship of teachers' sense of self-efficacy as a fundamental teachers' construct with another important construct, empowerment. It is recommended that some other researches can be conducted checking the correlation of teachers' efficacy with some other constructs such as teacher reflection, teacher classroom management behavior, and teacher and student motivation.

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