

Teacher Self-Efficacy: Implication for Chinese College English Teachers' Development

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Abstract—With the advancement of research on teacher's development, researchers have paid much attention to teachers' sense of self-efficacy which directly affects teachers' self-development and teaching effect. The previous researches have shown that teachers with high self-efficacy probably will have a positive effect on their own development and students' academic achievement. Due to the current situation of Chinese college English teachers, there are some problems needed to be paid attention to. This article is to analyze how to cultivate Chinese college English teachers' self-efficacy in order to improve education quality.

Keywords-self-efficacy, college English teachers, education quality

I. INTRODUCTION

With the further study on teachers, teachers' self-efficacy has been brought into much attention and been a hot topic. As the core of teachers' belief, teachers' self-efficacy is the key to teaching and education reform. The researches both home and abroad not only construct the teachers' self-efficacy theory, but also put forward the teachers' training program in order to improve teachers' self-efficacy and education quality. In terms of our countries' educational situation, our colleges should adopt the theory of self-efficacy to deal with the educational problems.

It was Bandura who first made a description on the concept of self-efficacy. Bandura(1977) defined self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capacities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments"(p.3). Consistent with the general formulation of self-efficacy, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy(in press) defined teacher efficacy as a teacher's "judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated." In China, some researchers began to focus on the sense of self-efficacy. In 2001, Liu Maoyan made an investigative study on primary school and middle school teachers' sense of self-efficacy and its influential factors. In 2003, Zhang Yunying studied the relationship between language teachers' teaching efficacy and their interpersonal behavior and the impact of two variables on students' achievements. Pang Lijuan studied teachers' self-efficacy and held the view that teachers' self-efficacy is the internal motivation for teachers' own development.

In China, English, as the second language, is one of the obligatory courses each student has been learning from primary school to college. Our government attaches great importance to the study of English. Nowadays, people are always talking about the college English educational reform, which poses a big challenge to college English teachers. Therefore, it is better to study college English teachers' self-efficacy. This article is to give suggestions to improve college English teachers' self-efficacy from the perspective of the theory of self-efficacy in order to improve the education quality and college English teachers' development.

II. TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY: IMPLICATION FOR CHINESE COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT

A. *The Theory of Self-Efficacy*

Self-efficacy is a key element in Bandura's(1977b) social learning theory which refers to one's belief in one's capability to perform a special task. Bandura (1978, p. 240) defined self-efficacy as "a judgment of one's ability to execute a particular behavior pattern." Wood and Bandura (1989) expanded upon this definition by suggesting that self-efficacy beliefs form a central role in the regulatory process through which an individual's motivation and performance attainments are governed. Self-efficacy judgments also determine how much effort people will spend on a task and how long they will persist with it. People with strong self-efficacy beliefs exert greater efforts to master a challenge while those with weak self-efficacy beliefs are likely to reduce their efforts or even quit (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). In short, self-efficacy theory is a common theme in current views of motivation(Graham&Weiner, 1996), primarily because of its predictive power and application for practically any behavior task. In this article, I just focus on the teachers' self-efficacy, specifically college English teachers' self-efficacy.

B. *Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Its Influential Factors*

1) *Teachers' Self-Efficacy*: Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy(in press) defined teacher efficacy as a teacher's "judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated." Woolfolk Hoy(1990) noted, "researchers have found few consistent

relationships between characteristics of teachers and the behavior or learning of students. Teachers' sense of efficacy... is an exception to this general rule"(p.81) Teachers' self-efficacy will not only impact their own career development, but also will influence students. Students under the instruction of the teacher with high self-efficacy generally have outperformed students in other classes. Ashton et al(1986) mention that teachers with low self-efficacy tend to avoid arranging the teaching activities beyond their capacity. They lack of efficient patience when helping students to overcome difficulties, and are less likely to spare more time to look for teaching reference materials which can help students better understand and grasp knowledge. Woolflok&Hoy(1990) indicate that teachers with high self-efficacy tend to adopt democratic attitude , develop students' personality and foster their self-discipline. Li Hua(2000) discovers in his research that there is much difference between teachers with high self-efficacy and those with low self-efficacy in classroom time arrangement, cognitive level of classroom questions, questioning subjects and feedback to students. Teachers with high self-efficacy perform better in those aspects. Therefore, teachers' self-efficacy is not only an important teaching index, but also influential in teachers' teaching performance and students' performance.

2) *Factors Influencing Teachers' Self-Efficacy*: According to Xu Fuming, factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy can be summarized as three aspects: personal factors, school factors and social factors.

Gender, education, teaching years, teaching ability and personality are the personal factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy. Xin Tao(1994) found that the teachers with higher academic degrees have a stronger and higher sense of self-efficacy and they believe that they are capable of inspiring students' learning motivation. Riggs&Enochs(1989) believe that ability deficiency results in lower sense of teaching efficacy.

School atmosphere is one of the key factors influencing teachers' attitudes and behavior. Ashton(1984) holds the view that school atmosphere, teachers' morale or principles' leadership can determine the level of teachers' self-efficacy. And teaching equipment deficiency and much more work pressure may also impact teachers' self-efficacy. Xin Tao et al(1990) find that teacher-student relationship, school culture and opportunities providing for teachers' development affect teachers' self-efficacy significantly.

Social structure may have great impact on teachers' self-efficacy. Wang Shourong(1992) points out that government policies, mass media, salary, occupational reputation and social acceptance are the important social factors influencing teachers' self-efficacy. Demo&Gibson(1984) hold the view that parents' expectation to their children and their way of communicating with schools will directly influence students' learning attitude, and indirectly affect teachers' self-efficacy.

C. *Strategies to Improve Teachers' Self-Efficacy*

Faced with great innovation in college English education, we should pay much attention to self-efficacy of college English teachers and try to improve it. Since teachers' self-efficacy may be influenced by personal, school and social factors. It is better to find the corresponding strategies to improve teachers' self-efficacy accordingly.

1) *Endeavors by the college English Teachers*: We have already known that teachers' personal factors influence their self-efficacy. Therefore, college English teachers should become aware that it is of great importance for them to further their study and broaden their knowledge in order to improve their language proficiency. It is necessary for them to renew their knowledge to catch up with the pace of the changing world. On the other hand, they need read some research magazines in order to know the research frontier of English teaching, which is beneficial for their teaching and research study. With the rich knowledge and advanced teaching theories, college English teachers will be more confident to have a high self-efficacy.

2) *Endeavors by the Schools*:

a) *Promoting Teachers' collaborating Learning and Experience Communication*: Former researches have already indicated that collaborating learning and experience communication can greatly promote teachers' self-efficacy. The share of teaching experience and collaborating learning can promote the communication of teaching knowledge, on the other hand, it can improve teachers' capability in solving problems. While rich teaching knowledge and better problem-solving ability can improve teachers' self-efficacy. It is a good way for college English teachers to observe the teaching of excellent peers. By observing and imitating, college English teachers' self-efficacy can be improved.

b) *Strengthening Professional Training of College English Teachers*: Teacher professional development refers to professional training which helps teachers to meet the needs of students and to adapt to social progress in their career development. Teachers should be lifelong learners. College English teachers need to learn to change teaching concept, to master new technological skills and to learn new teaching methods in order to catch up with the education reform. Professional training can help teachers to adapt to the reform. With professional training, teachers will be more confident about their own ability. And their self-efficacy will be increased.

c) *Optimize Teacher-student Relationship*: Good teacher-student relationship can promote teachers' responsibility and self-efficacy. But, in China, the class size is big. It is rather difficult for college English teachers to establish good relationship with each student. Researches have already shown that the smaller the class size, the higher the teachers' self-efficacy. Because in small class, it is easy for teacher to communicate with each student and adopt method to each student, which can help improve teaching efficiency and teachers' self-efficacy. Therefore, teachers'

endeavor to the establishment of good teacher-student relationship and good class culture will definitely promote their self-efficacy and benefit both teachers and students.

3) *Endeavors by the Society*: Some studies related to emotions and well-being find that self-efficacy has a positive correlation with well-being and satisfaction while a negative correlation with anxiety and depression level. College English teachers are bearing over-loaded teaching tasks. Consequently, they are in a bad mental and physical condition. Some of them suffer a lot from depression and anxiety because of over tiredness and exhaustion and a large number of teachers are suffering a lot from occupational diseases. These diseases increase the psychological burden on teachers, reducing teachers' passion for teaching and have a negative impact on teachers' self-efficacy. Therefore, society should pay more attention to the mental and physical state of college English teachers. The whole society should establish a genuine respect for college English teachers and create a good atmosphere of respecting knowledge.

III. CONCLUSION

Teachers play critical role in education. The improvement of educational quality depends on the quality of teachers. College English is rather important not only for the students but also for the society. Therefore, it is of great importance to pay attention to the development of college English teachers by focusing on both internal and external factors. The theory of self-efficacy is really applicable in the motivation of college English teachers. Colleges should try to motivate college English teachers from the perspective of self-efficacy theory in order to improve the educational quality. It is also necessary for colleges to find the effective measures to measure teachers' self-efficacy.

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