# Original Paper

# Classroom Management Self-Efficacy of Pre-Service Teachers

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## Abstract

This quantitative, quasi-experimental design study examined 75 pre-service teachers' perceptions of their own self-efficacy regarding classroom management. Data was collected at three different intervals throughout the student teaching experience, which was also accompanied by a training seminar focusing on classroom organization and management (Classroom Organization and Management Program). Results showed that pre-service teachers exhibited significantly higher perceptions of self-efficacy at different intervals throughout their student teaching. Data from this study provides Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) with further data, which will allow them to create program curricula and strategies to better prepare pre-service teachers to become successful and confident classroom teachers.

## Keywords

self-efficacy, pre-service teacher, classroom management, higher education, Educator Preparation Program

# 1. Introduction

Policymakers, politicians, and school systems are seeking new ways to improve education in the United States, yet the advancement of education begins with teachers and their academic educator preparation program (Darling-Hammond, 2012). In 2007, the Tennessee General Assembly required the formation of an evaluation for education preparation programs. This evaluation was developed to ensure the effectiveness of these programs by examining data of completers, placements, retention, licensing exam passage rates, and the overall effectiveness of each program's graduates through the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) (Springer, Swain, & Rodriguez, 2016). With the development of this evaluation, Race to the Top legislation, and The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,

education preparation programs must develop programs that train teachers to be effective quality teachers.

In a recent review of educator preparation programs, universities were encouraged to prepare their future teachers through Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) in which pre-service teachers received greater field experience and preparation in order to create higher quality future teachers (Greenberg, 2013). A renewed interest in educator preparation reform as postulated by not only The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) but also the new assessment portfolio through edTPA demands more rigorous goals and standards from universities who are preparing today's teachers (Heafner, McIntyre, & Spooner, 2014; Stanford Center for Assessment, n.d.). The concepts that remain consistent with CAEP and edTPA are the need for an enriched learning environment, knowledge of a variety of strategies, and high perceptions of self-efficacy for teachers (Brown, 2009).

This study examined the underlying problem of the low self-efficacy of pre-service teachers in regards to classroom management. Studies show that without adequate preparation teachers leave the profession within three to five years (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Quality teachers and pre-service teachers exhibit an ability to manage a classroom, create an atmosphere where learning can take place, and increase student academic achievement, all of which may be why teaching is considered to be one of the most stressful jobs (Klassen et al., 2013). If teacher efficacy is high, that is, if teachers believe that they can be successful in teaching and that they have the skills to positively impact students in the classroom, then they are more successful educators and less likely to leave the profession (Black, 2015; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001).

This study sought to build on the existing work of teacher self-efficacy in order to combat decreasing teacher retention rates. Educator preparation programs play a critical role in teacher effectiveness and teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy has been correlated to many student outcomes including student achievement and classroom management (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross, 1992). Studies have shown that pre-service teachers are much more effective after the student teaching experience (Hoy & Spero, 2005; Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008; Summers, Davis, & Hoy, 2017; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). However, during this time pre-service teachers can also develop unrealistic notions or expectations that later lead them to abandon the profession of teaching (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). In addition, beliefs about self-efficacy are developed during this time and persevere over the educational career of the teacher (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007).

For over 20 years research has been conducted on the function of Bandura's (1977, 1997) theory of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is fundamentally explained as an individual's belief in their ability to perform a specific task or behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1997). According to Leitch and Mitchell (2007), teacher behavior is one of the most impactful influences on student enthusiasm and motivation to learn. Being an effective teacher who has high self-efficacy and belief in their students' ability to learn and achieve is conveyed through teacher behavior and rapport with the class (Sufka & George, 2000). Teacher efficacy has been connected to many classroom aspects, such as student/teacher relationship

quality (Summers et al., 2017), teachers' psychological well-being, job satisfaction, teacher burnout (Lim & Eo, 2014), academic adjustment, motivation, and classroom management processes (Zee & Koomen, 2016).

## 1.1 The Cost of Teacher Attrition

Teacher retention is a concern many school districts face and the cost associated with this loss puts a financial burden on schools that do not have funding to waste (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007; Curtis, 2012; Kopkowski, 2008). In 2012, it was estimated that \$7 million dollars annually is spent across the nation filling, replacing, retraining, advertising, and processing applicants for positions that have been left vacant (Barnes et al., 2006). Forty percent of new teachers in some districts leave the profession during their first two years (Rivera, 2016). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, each year 20% of year one to year three teachers leave the school and either quit the profession of teaching or move to another school (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014). Half of all teacher turn over is due to teachers leaving the profession all together (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) also point to teachers transferring to more desirable schools, which leaves high need schools searching for quality teachers.

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) go on to explain, "School poverty levels are clearly related to the amount of out-of-field teaching. That is, in most fields, teachers in high-poverty schools are more likely to be teaching out-of-field than are teachers in more affluent schools" (p. 30). This is due to a shortage of teachers who are willing to work in low-socioeconomic schools and the shortage of teachers who are seeking to major in high need areas, such as math and science. Workplace pressure, coupled with low teacher pay, has caused much of these attrition problems according to Weiss (1999). As school systems struggle to retain high quality teachers, EPPs must help to ensure that their candidates are prepared for the ever-changing classroom and its multitude of expectations that is today's reality.

## 1.2 Teacher Efficacy

For over 20 years research has been conducted on the function of Bandura's (1977, 1997) theory of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is fundamentally explained as an individual's belief in their ability to perform a specific task or behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1997). According to Leitch and Mitchell (2007), teacher behavior is one of the most impactful influences on student enthusiasm and motivation to learn. Being an effective teacher who has high self-efficacy and belief in their students' ability to learn and achieve is conveyed through teacher behavior and rapport with the class (Sufka & George, 2000). Teacher efficacy has been connected to many classroom aspects, such as student/teacher relationship quality (Summers et al., 2017), teachers' psychological well-being, job satisfaction, teacher burnout (Lim & Eo, 2014), academic adjustment, motivation, and classroom management processes (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Teacher efficacy may also determine which teaching strategies, classroom management, and intensive instruction to struggling students teachers may use in their classroom (Fine, Zygouris-Coe, Senokossoff, & Fang, 2013). Teacher efficacy is viewed as a fundamental social cognitive theory that intentionally

drives the teacher to select successful teaching strategies or to select incorrect strategies, thus creating a successful learning environment or an unsuccessful learning environment (Kazempour & Sadler, 2015). In order to create a classroom that is viewed by the student as a respectful learning environment in which they feel safe and confident that they will not be harmed, teachers must have the self-efficacy to know how to implement a well-developed, thoughtful classroom plan (Bandura, 1997; Black, 2015; Hoy & Spero, 2005; Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008; Summers et al., 2017; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). Teachers who are reflective practitioners plan each day in response to what happened during the previous day and understand that flexibility and modification of lessons can have an impact on student achievement. Each classroom is different and therefore must not be treated the same. Teachers who are confident students (Black, 2015). It is also important that teachers have a positive attitude about teaching and the subject they teach (Ayhan, 2016).

Teacher's self-efficacy plays a critical role in the functioning and motivation of a teacher; thus, self-efficacy may be a consideration in determining how much of an influence teachers have on their students' academic success and enthusiasm for academics (Hoy & Spero, 2005; Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008; Summers et al., 2017; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). A recent study Holzberger, Phillip, and Kunter (2013) discovered that teachers with high self-efficacy attitudes were able to teach at a higher quality level, including classroom discipline and management and the ability to reach all levels of students, while connecting the learning to real world situations. It is also important to point out that this study determined that the more the teacher was cognizant of his or her abilities to educate students, the more developed the quality of instruction the next year (Holzberger et al., 2013). Teachers with high self-efficacy tend to be more open to the changing atmosphere of education and are willing to explore new ideas in the classroom in order to help their students achieve mastery. They are also more flexible and willing to adjust learning to focus on students who would otherwise struggle in a rigid classroom. When pre-service teachers embark on their journey through the Educator Preparation Program (EPP) most have an optimistic outlook, in which they believe that they can positively impact all students with whom they come in contact. Bandura (1997) postulated that self-efficacy is confidence in one's ability to affect student performance or learning. In other words, teachers have the ability to motivate students to increase their achievements. In this way, student attitudes and motivation may be changed because of their teacher's experiences (Black, 2015); therefore universities and the EPPs must appropriately prepare pre-service teachers. There are many aspects they need to follow including the content necessary to teach, the classroom management tools, and impress the need for promotion of an atmosphere where high expectations are the focus. If these qualities are taught then pre-service teachers will be more prepared to meet the rigorous standards teachers must accomplish. It is also important that EPP programs maintain effective cooperating teachers for their pre-service teachers to observe and learn from during student teaching. Alderman states that, "an effective model is important for strengthening beliefs of teachers with

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low self-efficacy" (2013, p. 199). If EPPs follow an effective model during the student teaching student teaching-training period, pre-service teachers will be better prepared for the rigorous career of teaching. *1.3 Student Teaching and Efficacy* 

Teachers are considered to be fixed individuals, unable to modify and adapt to new methods of teaching (Portes & Smagorinsky, 2010), but students are more varied today than they have ever been. However, "the rapidly changing society of today requires from teachers that they are able and willing to cope with the many challenges of change" (Van der Heijden, Geldens, Beijaard, & Popeijus, 2015, p. 2). As postulated by Gray (2001), students learn differently and teachers must be taught how to implement different strategies to help facilitate learning and readjustment of their teaching strategies. It is during the student teaching timeline that pre-service teachers can put into practice the knowledge they have gained throughout their educator preparation coursework.

Student teaching allows teachers to experience the classroom and school dynamic of today's variability of learners. Student teaching is one of the most difficult times during a candidate's preparation, but it is also the longest experience they have in the classroom environment (Goldhaber, Krieg, & Theobald, 2017). Four years of preparation and their career depends on this one student teaching experience in which they should be gaining valued classroom experience. Not only is this a new experience in an unfamiliar environment, but pre-service teachers also must put in many hours of preparation while continuing to keep up with university requirements. In addition to these academic constraints, they also must learn about their new students, cooperating teachers, and the school itself.

The responsibility of universities is to equip pre-service teachers with efficacy in three major areas: subject area knowledge, curricular knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge (Blömeke et al., 2015). The central focus of student teaching should be the explicit implementation of lesson plans, classroom management application, and authentic reflection of lessons that are taught. It is important to point out that educator preparation programs should not only focus on teacher knowledge of the subject they will be teaching, but how to teach that subject in a manner in which all students can learn.

Yet, facilitating pre-service teachers to increase self-efficacy starts as they enter the Educator Preparation Program at the university level. Field experiences, practicums, and later student teaching are all integral segments in producing a quality teacher with high self-efficacy (Lachuk & Koellner, 2015). Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) explained that strengthening efficacy during the pre-service period is extremely important so that pre-service teachers experience successes when they put into practice what they have learned during their time in the educator preparation program. Hoy (2000) goes further by suggesting that developing self-efficacy in pre-service teachers will determine their future careers as teachers. Educator preparation programs must raise competence by successfully giving them experiences where they can be taught what to do and put into practice the things they have learned to be effective in the classroom (Yost, 2006).

## 2. Methodology

In order to examine pre-service teachers' views of themselves and their ability in a classroom with successful classroom management, a convenient sample of participants from one university was chosen and surveyed at three different times throughout their student teaching experience. All pre-service teachers were enrolled in student teaching during a spring term and consented to the study before the study began. The researcher used a face-to-face survey for convenience due to mutual attendance at the pre-service teacher induction seminar, mid-semester seminar, and final seminar meeting. Pre-service teachers were given a pre-survey prior to the required student teaching experience, a mid-semester survey, and a post-survey after completion of the student teaching field experience. After all data was collected, Intellectus Statistics (2017) was used to conduct paired samples *t*-tests. This study sought to answer the following question:

1) Is there a significant difference in the self-efficacy regarding classroom management of pre-service teachers who completed a field-based methods course embedded into their student teaching?

#### 3. Research Design

This study incorporated a quantitative, quasi-experimental design to detect significant changes in classroom management at different phases throughout their student teaching. The Classroom Organization and Management Program (COMP) developed at Vanderbilt University by Dr. Carolyn Evertson was embedded in the student teaching experience. The COMP training focuses on strategies that target classroom management skills and has been used in studies investigating effectiveness issues (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). This study was also a non-randomized study given the participant group incorporated naturally assigned participants while the researched controlled the exposure to the intervention (Howell, 2010). This design allowed the researchers to make assumptions about causation and implications of their findings, though, causation was not explicitly determined.

#### 4. Instrumentation

Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) was designed to measure three subscales: (a) efficacy in student engagement, (b) efficacy in instructional strategies, and (c) efficacy in instructional strategies. The TSES has 24 items and has been deemed as a useful instrument in determining teacher efficacy when dealing with student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies according to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014), though for the purposes of this study, only items related to classroom management were utilized. The survey requires participants to rate items on a Likert-scale from 1 (nothing)—9 (a great deal). Content validity and reliability was established by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) who deemed the survey as highly valid and reliable. For the current study, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.94 was determined, indicating excellent reliability.

## 5. Conclusion

Results connected to the research question indicated that there was a significant increase in self-efficacy from Time 1 (M = 6.70) to Time 2 (M = 7.33) as well as from Time 1 (M = 6.70) to Time 3 (M = 7.54). The mean score for self-efficacy at Time 1 was significantly lower than the mean score for self-efficacy at Time 2 (t(75) = -6.27, p < .001), while the mean score for self-efficacy at Time 1 was significantly lower than the mean score of self-efficacy at Time 3 (t(75) = -6.93, p < .001). Tables 1 and 2 present the results of the analyses.

Table 1. Paired Samples t-Test for Self-Efficacy Regarding Classroom Management Time 1 andClassroom Management Time 2

Classroom	Management	Classroom	Management				
Time 1		Time 2					
М	SD	М	SD	t	р	d	
6.70	1.31	7.33	1.15	-6.27	< .001	0.51	

*Note*. Degrees of Freedom for the t-statistic = 75. d represents Cohen's d.

Table 2. Paired	Samples t-Tes	t for Self-Efficacy	Regarding	Classroom	Management	Time 1	l and
Classroom Mar	nagement Time	3					

Classroom	Management	Classroom	Management				
Time 1		Time 3					
М	SD	М	SD	t	р	d	
6.70	1.31	7.54	1.04	-6.93	< .001	0.71	

*Note*. Degrees of Freedom for the t-statistic = 75. d represents Cohen's d.

The results of both paired samples *t*-tests were significant suggesting that the self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers regarding their ability to management their classroom significantly increased from the beginning to the midpoint of their student teaching as well as from the beginning to the end of their student teaching. Though causality cannot be confirmed given the research design, it is important to note that all pre-service teachers completed the Classroom Organization and Management Training (COMP) in conjunction with their student teaching. According to Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, and Leutner (2015) the Classroom Organization and Management Training (COMP) could have a significant impact on new teachers. Furthermore, this training may create a higher quality teacher in the classroom and in the teacher's proceeding years in the classroom (Dicke et al., 2015).

Bandura (1986) found that modeling and experiences help to enhance self-efficacy. The data demonstrated in this study suggests that the modeling by the cooperating teachers that took place during the student teaching experience, the experience of teaching in the classroom, and the COMP

training presented to pre-service teachers increased pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. Hoy (2000) explains that during student teaching some of the most powerful experiences are developing pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. It may be these experiences coupled with the COMP training that has led to the increase in self-efficacy beliefs in this study.

According to the data, there was a difference between teacher self-efficacy regarding classroom management from the beginning to the end of the field-based methods course and student teaching. Results indicated that self-efficacy beliefs regarding classroom management were significantly higher for these pre-service teachers that were able to experience an embedded seminar during their student teaching experience.

Results indicated that participants felt more comfortable and capable after student teaching experience and embedded seminar conducted throughout their student teaching. This may be due to the fact that as pre-service teachers were provided strategies and tools during the seminars, they were able to readily apply them into the classroom during the student teaching experience. Though none of the pre-service teacher participants had been exposed as classroom managers in practice before this semester long experience, they experienced two classroom settings where they were the practicing teachers.

Classroom management remains one of the most challenging skills for teachers to acquire. The approach and delivery of classroom management training may determine how well teachers are able to apply the strategies they have been taught in their own classroom. According to Evertson (1996) the development of The Classroom Management and Training Program sought to fill a need for both novice and seasoned teachers by focusing on planning and implementation of effective concepts such as room set-up, rules and procedures, accountability, motivation, and strategies for managing student discipline issues and behaviors. The course offering developed through COMP training enhanced an already substantial, strategy-filled program offered by the university involved in the research.

#### 6. Limitations

This study is limited because the sample population consisted of pre-service teachers from a single university in West Tennessee; therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to pre-service teachers and universities in all settings. Though, the research design allowed the researchers to make assumptions about causation and implications of their findings, causation could not be explicitly determined. Though there was an increase in self-efficacy at each data collection point, other factors outside the treatment, could have been a cause, thus more research is needed.

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