

Factors Affecting College Lecturers' Self-Efficacy in Teaching

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Abstract

Lecturers' self-efficacy in teaching influences many different factors, including their instructional patterns, performance expectation level from learners, quality of learning environment, and interpersonal relationships within the community. The present study attempted to explore perspectives of college lecturers regarding this topic in order to draw meaningful conclusions and implications. To this end, four college instructors from two different higher education institutions participated in an online questionnaire. The results showed that positive attitudes and active responses of learners, and a high degree of freedom to prepare lectures tend to improve their quality of self-efficacy in teaching. On the other hand, classes that are either too easy to hard, inactiveness among learners, and heavy workload other than teaching can worsen teaching efficacy. Lastly, the participant lecturers believed that their self-efficacy are would foster if they are allowed to choose courses they wish to teach, observe a more experienced instructor's lectures, and teach smaller size classes. Findings are likely to contribute to enhanced understanding of features that are likely to affect quality of self-efficacy in teaching among college lecturers.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, College Lecturers, Social Cognitive Theory, Higher Education, Lecture Quality

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The origin of self-efficacy derives from the work of Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory [1] in which he defined it as the following: "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p.3). Generally speaking, self-efficacy refers to individuals' belief that they can perform a certain set of actions required to achieve desired outcomes. In a later year, Bandura(2001) asserted that 'perceived self-efficacy' plays a key role that decides the level of performance achievement and motivation among instructors [2].

This particular notion naturally makes a direct link with the teaching practices in higher education settings. In other words, the more strongly lecturers believe they can bring positive impacts to learners, the higher level of self-efficacy in teaching [3]. For example, teaching self-efficacy among instructors can impact the instructional patterns that can influence students' learning outcomes [4]. Researchers asserted that lecturers with a strong self-efficacy level are likely to intervene strategies designed to reduce negative effects, foster learning performance, create a productive environment, and cultivate a better interpersonal relationship in the community [5]. More specifically, Rodriguez, Regueiro, Blas, Valle, Piñeiro, and Cerezo (2014) found a

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positive association between college lecturers' perceived self-efficacy in teaching and their motivation level toward teaching, along with higher willingness to apply strategic instructional works [6].

1.2 Rationale of the Study

Based on the positive effects evident among college lecturers who adopted a high level of self-efficacy in teaching, researchers need to explore this particular topic. This is mainly because perspectives from the lecturers who regularly practice teaching in higher education field may lead to yielding relevant and valuable insights, while sorting out factors that may worsen the quality of self-efficacy in teaching. The research results can also suggest methods that university administration can provide to improve its quality. College lecturers in fact require many different forms of assistance to better manage their actions and decisions concerning their teaching practice [7].

Though higher education is currently encountering a transformative change as cutting-edge technology constantly shows remarkable advances lately, instructors' self-efficacy is an area that no technology development can influence. Thus, it remains important for higher education researchers to explore key features affecting the self-efficacy in teaching among college instructors. In this rapidly evolving educational landscape where diverse teaching modalities are becoming accepted and predominant, there is a research need for investigating factors that may affect the quality of lecturers' self-efficacy. Probing factors in this relation is may result in building a more productive learning environment, better faculty development, and enhanced quality of higher education in general.

1.3 Research Questions

To this end, the study is conducted based on the following research questions:

- RQ 1. What factors do college lecturers believe positively impact their self-efficacy in teaching?
- RQ 2. What factors do college lecturers believe negatively impact their self-efficacy in teaching?
- RQ 3. What methods can be suggested to foster college lecturers' self-efficacy in teaching?

2. METHODS

2.1 Participant Lecturers and Data Collection

In this study, an online survey method was implemented for data collection procedures. Braun et al. (2021) introduced that online qualitative survey consists of a key advantage: openness and flexibility to discuss a wide range of topics of interest to the researchers. It is mainly because this approach allows the participants to access to data through representational practices [8]. According to the authors, the use of online surveys offers other benefits to both parties of researchers and participants: namely, a 'wide-angle lens' on given topics that can produce rich and focused data, encouraging disclosure of participants for sensitive topics, and practical advantages for participants and benefits for research conductors.

A pre-produced Google Form was given to each of four participant lecturers. At the period of the survey, the participant lecturers were teaching at two different higher education institutions in South Korea. Their majors were economics, early childhood education, public administration, and general education. All responded in three business days. The data researcher collected were analyzed in order to make relevant conclusions and implications regarding what affects their quality of self-efficacy in teaching.

2.2 Questionnaire Structure

Followed by the introduction of the current study, an informed consent was provided, asking whether the participants agree to participate in the study. Clicking a "Yes" icon was required to move to the next session, which asked for their socio-demographics, including age, gender, and teaching field.

The questionnaire consisted of three open-ended questions, each aiming at investigating factors that positively and negatively affecting their self-efficacy in teaching, and methods that can promote the quality of self-efficacy in teaching, shown in Table 1. These questions were designed to elicit the participants'

responses to generate valuable insights into the relevant topics.

Table 1. Question Items in the Questionnaire

| Category | Item |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Factors Affecting the Participant Lecturers' Self-efficacy in Teaching | 1. What factors do you believe positively impact your self-efficacy in teaching? |
| | 2. What factors do you believe negatively impact your self-efficacy in teaching? |
| | 3. What methods can you suggest to foster your self-efficacy in teaching as a lecturer? |

3. RESULTS

3.1 Factors Positively Affecting College Lecturers' Self-efficacy in Teaching

The participant lecturers appeared to consider various aspects students as features that can positively shape the quality of their self-efficacy in teaching. A more detailed set of responses is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis on Factors Positively Affecting College Lecturers' Self-efficacy

| Statement | Participant |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| "Personally, it is the [levels of] reactions the students show to my lectures that decides the overall quality of teaching self-efficacy that I feel." | Lecturer 1 |
| "I feel more confident in teaching whenever I fluently answer to students' questions. Such great and even productive interactions happening during the lectures often make me feel that I'm doing a pretty good job at teaching." | Lecturer 3 |
| "Students' positive and active reaction to my lectures always gives a great level of encouragement, making a 'virtuous circle'. I mean, students' positive responses make my self-efficacy better, resulting in preparing my lectures even more diligently, and it ultimately gives positive effect to students, and so on." | Lecturer 2 |

3.2 Factors Negatively Affecting College Lecturers' Self-efficacy in Teaching

It was evident that students' attitudes and the way they react to lectures tend to form negative self-efficacy in teaching among the instructors. Greater details are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Analysis on Factors Negatively Affecting College Lecturers' Self-efficacy

| Statement | Participant |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| "I find students' disloyal attitudes such as tardy, absence, missing deadline, daydreaming during lectures as evidence that the quality of my lectures is low. If my lectures contained better and more interesting topics and I conveyed them in a more appealing fashion, they wouldn't have shown such bad reactions." | Lecturer 1 |
| "Heavy workloads other than teaching, a unilateral lecture where interactive communications or questions are absent, failure to adjust the level of course contents [e.g., making it either too hard or too easy]." | Lecturer 2 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| “When students fall asleep during the class, I often blame myself for insufficiently preparing the lectures, [resulting in lower self-efficacy in teaching].” | Lecturer 4 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|

3.3 Factors that may Foster College Lecturers’ Self-efficacy in Teaching

Suggestions the participant lecturers made included a high degree of freedom of choosing courses, an opportunity to observe a more experienced instructor, an educational session to promote communication skills with students, and a smaller class size. Its detailed responses are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Analysis on Factors Promoting College Lecturers’ Self-efficacy in Teaching

| Statement | Participant |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| “I wish for freely choosing the course I can teach every semester. Doing so will ensure the quality of lecture, which will result in improvement of students’ attitudes and satisfaction level, and it will improve teaching efficacy of myself. What a great virtuous circle!” | Lecturer 2 |
| “I always wanted to attend to a senior professor whose reputation for teaching is well known. As you know, it is like an unspoken rule that professors shouldn’t observe each other’s lectures. So, if school [administration] opens up a room for such opportunities, it would help me greatly [to improve the quality of self-efficacy in teaching].” | Lecturer 1 |
| “University offers good seminars and sessions where I can learn various skills for teaching. The most thing I need at this point is improving my communication skills, especially with [and for] students. I believe better communication skills will make my teaching efficacy better.” | Lecturer 3 |
| “Smaller class sizes are better for more intense and productive communication with the students. Such classes will be conducted as project-based learning [PBL], which is something I’m confident about. But currently, it is hardly permitted to open up classes like this. If the school allows me to freely decide the size of courses I’m teaching, it’d be helpful.” | Lecturer 4 |

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Research Findings

This study investigated a few of key features that may affect the quality of college instructors’ self-efficacy in teaching. In this regard, four college instructors from two higher education institutions in South Korea participated in an online survey that mainly consisted of three open-ended questions.

The results revealed that, first, the lecturers suggested the following features as factors that can positively affect their self-efficacy in teaching: students’ positive attitudes and reactions, and active communications between instructors and learners. This finding indicates that the student party holds a certain amount of responsibility to form instructors’ self-efficacy when it comes to teaching. Second, the lecturers responded that the following can negatively interfere the quality of self-efficacy in teaching: students’ disloyal attitudes (e.g., tardy, absence, day-dreaming, and missed assignments, etc.), workloads not related to teaching, and lack of interactions within lectures. A large portion of these features also related to students’ accountability. Lastly, the participant lecturers suggested the following as features that can possibly enhance self-efficacy in teaching: autonomy when choosing courses they are to teach, opportunity to observe a more experienced lecturer’s instruction in the field, a session designed to promote communication skills, and a class size with lower number of students. Their responses indicated that the university administration holds potential to improve instructors’ traits related to teaching in general.

4.2 Limitations and Future Recommendation

One major limitation is the small sample size; this could lessen the level of external validity of the findings. The design of the questionnaire that lacks other forms of items than open-ended questions is another concern. Despite the advantages of conducting surveys online, since the participant lecturers failed to provide follow-up questions, one can predict inadequate depth of authentic understanding that they revealed. Missed opportunities of in-person interviews is another limitation. Researchers who are interested in exploring this specific topic are encouraged to consider these deficiencies prior to conducting relevant researchers in the near future.

Future researchers interested in self-efficacy in teaching among college instructors need to collect data from a wider and a larger participation pool, so that generalizability of findings is ensured. Development of a more inclusive questionnaire that contains multiple forms of items other than open-ended (e.g., provision of follow-up questions, a mix of open-ended *and* close-ended items, etc.) may help the researchers to yield broader findings. Additionally, adaptation of both quantitative *and* qualitative methods could make contribution to more comprehensive and thorough data for future analysis.

4.3 Conclusion

The current study presented a few valuable insights in terms of self-efficacy among college instructors. It was evident that the participant lecturers believe that other parties, including students and administrative staff members of university, hold responsibilities for the quality of their teaching self-efficacy. As students demonstrate positive attitudes such as proactive participation, listening to the lectures attentively, and building bilateral communications, lecturers are likely to perceive their teaching in a more encouraging fashion. Other notable suggestions were that university administrators have a room to improve lecturers' self-efficacy in teaching by ensuring a smaller class size, providing them with freedom to choose courses they are to teach, and conducting a series of educational sessions that are specifically designed to foster communication skills.

Higher education institutions are currently undergoing a wide range of changes due to artificial intelligence and other technological expansion, increase in enrollment of students with diverse backgrounds, and development of teaching methods. Because of such incidents, the complexities of contemporary academia are growing, negatively impacting the instructors. In order to confront the phenomena, universities recently examine instructors' burnout and mental well-being [9], teaching performance [10,11], lecturer competence to foster innovation and creativity in learning [12], and work environment in which they spend the majority of time [13]. Going along with the current shifts, the findings listed earlier may make contribution for higher education community to build a more productive environment in which instructors reach their full potential.

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