

Self-Efficacy: Theory to Educational Practice

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ABSTRACT

The concept of self-efficacy has its root in social cognitive theory proposed by American Psychologist, Albert Bandura, responsible for immense contribution to the field of education and several fields of psychology i.e., Social Learning and Observational Learning, Bobo-Doll Experiment. After the publication of “Self-Efficacy: Towards a Unifying Theory of Behavioural Change -1977” incalculable research works in behavioural science accomplished to predict and explain human functioning and learning with self-efficacy. Further, the proponents associated with self-efficacy theory have extended social and observational learning emphasizing the role of self-efficacy beyond the boundary of educational psychology, spreading to diversified fields as psychopathology, health and medicine, political and social change, business and international affairs (Pajares, 1996, 2004). In present context, research in the area of student’s self-efficacy has earned growing consideration with academic motivation and achievement. Evidence has shown that students having high self-efficacy choose to engage themselves in different academic domains for fostering development in their skills and abilities. When they have essential requisite skills, utilize their efforts to face difficulty in challenging tasks. This paper highlights self-efficacy theory, sources of efficacy beliefs- the key components in social cognitive learning theory and it describes the practical implication to the field of education. In addition, by demonstrating practical implications of self-efficacy theory, this paper suggests teachers and parents consider academic self-efficacy in academic world of students.

Keywords: *Self-Efficacy, Efficacy Belief, Academic Self-Efficacy, Academic Achievement*

Self-efficacy theory is considered as a subset of social cognitive theory of Bandura. Researchers addressed that self-efficacy theory is one of the most enduring contributions of Bandura to the field of academic achievement, learning and motivation (Pajares, 1996, 2004; Schunk, 1991). In social learning theory, self-efficacy is defined by Bandura as “People’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy concerns with the question of how an individual holds belief in his/her ability to execute a course of action, rather than how much a person likes him/her or what skills and abilities a person possesses. In his book, Bandura outlined the importance of self-efficacy in following way-

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“People make causal contributions to their own psychosocial functioning through mechanisms of personal agency. Among the mechanisms of agency, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal efficacy. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act. Efficacy belief, therefore, is a major basis of action. People guide their live by their beliefs of personal efficacy” (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1977).

It is revealed from Banduras’ theory that acquisition of required skills and abilities is not sufficient for a person to perform a task; he must have the belief in his abilities that he can undertake the task under difficult settings. For effective functioning, skill as well as efficacy belief required to execute appropriately. These two factors of human functioning influence one another, which are defined as “reciprocal causation”, it implies that functioning of skill depends upon the functioning of efficacy belief and vice-versa.

Structural sources of self-efficacy

For evaluating efficacy belief, all individual acquires information from four primary sources i.e. Mastery experience, Vicarious experience, Verbal persuasion and Emotional and psychological states of individuals. From these sources people judge their strength and capableness.

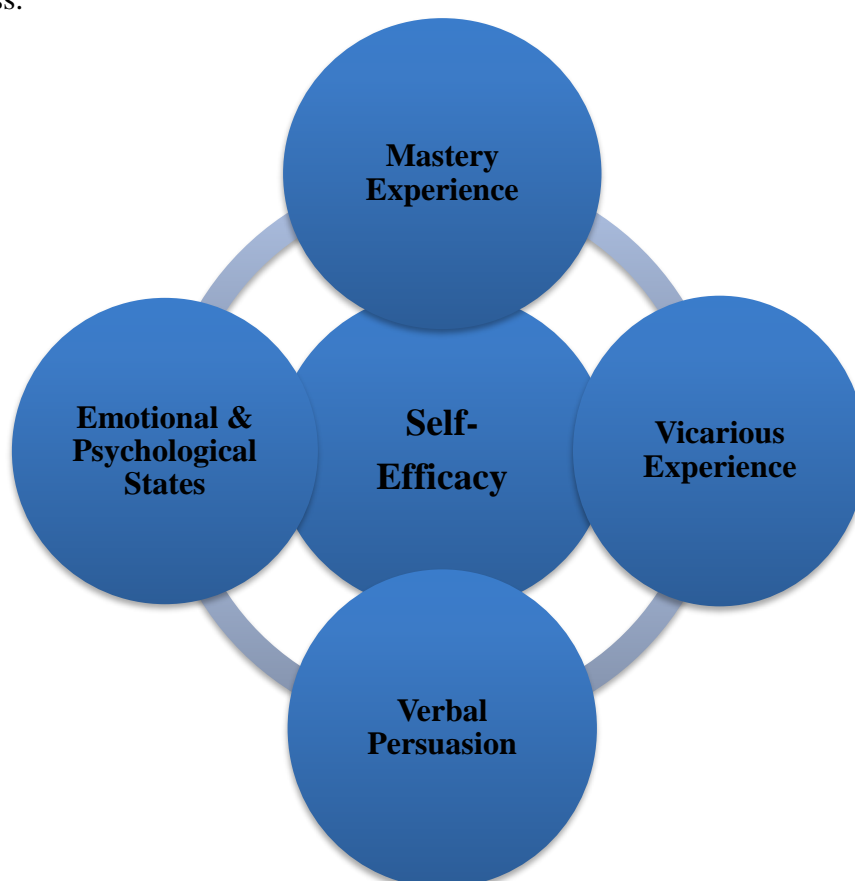


Figure 1: Sources of Self-Efficacy

1. Mastery Experience

Mastery experience has a concomitant relation with past success. Repeated past success experience can strengthen efficacy belief. It indicates that successful past experience may help the individual to be successful in similarly associated tasks by controlling the environment. For example, “after strong efficacy expectations are developed through

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repeated success, the negative impact of occasional failures is likely to be reduced” (Bandura, 1977, p. 195). In other words, the effect of failure efficacy depends on the strength of existing efficacy of an individual, or later failures may not negatively impact efficacy beliefs with the same extent as the impact of earlier failure. Research works have observed that mastery experience is one of the most influential sources among four primary efficacy information as it handover direct and authentic personal past experience that an individual requires to be successful.

2. Vicarious Experience

Observation is considered as the characteristic feature of social learning. In psychology specifically Behaviourisms theory, it is emphasized that learning of an individual can occur throughout the process observation. Self-efficacy theory is based on the principles of Behaviouristic thought. In self-efficacy theory, vicarious experience refers to learning by observing the success and failures of others. In an observer, vicarious experience develops the efficacy belief that they can also achieve success like that of the participant or the person observed. This observational experience generates a sense of social comparison and modelling in observers. Therefore, it is addressed by researchers that vicarious experience as the less dependable source of efficacy belief than the mastery experience.

3. Verbal Persuasion

Verbal persuasion is the third source of efficacy belief related to positive and negative appraisal of others. Generally, it is widely used in teaching learning environments to foster student’s belief that they are able to face difficult situations. When a teacher provides verbal feedback like “very good”, “Excellent”, to students’ behaviour, it develops positive efficacy beliefs about their academic skills and abilities among students. Hence, students’ self-efficacy is influenced by encouragement and discouragement of others. Bandura expressed that “Verbal persuasion alone may be limited in its power to create enduring increases in perceived efficacy, but it can bolster self-change if the positive appraisal is within realistic bounds” (Bandura, 1997, p. 101).

4. Emotional & Psychological States

Emotional and psychological state of an individual is the last and final source of efficacy belief. It refers to emotional and psychological feedback experienced by individuals during performing assigned tasks. According to Bandura, excessive physical and emotional efforts to be successful in task completion might have a negative impact on performance, but individuals who are not overcome by their stress reaction, receive efficacy belief in their ability. This efficacy belief received from physiological and psychological state cognitively evaluated by the individual, based on the level of arousal.

Academic Self-Efficacy

Academic self-efficacy is students’ perception in their academic skill and abilities for accomplishing assigned tasks or activities. In other words, how students hold belief in their capabilities in relation to academic prospectus. It can be measured by different dimensions of students’ academic works like learning process, reading and comprehension, memory, goal orientation, utilization of resources, peer relations, relationship with teacher, time management, examination and adjustment in academic setting and many other aspects of academic world. Research also showed that students’ self-efficacy is related to various academic and learning tasks (Cheng and Chiou, 2010).

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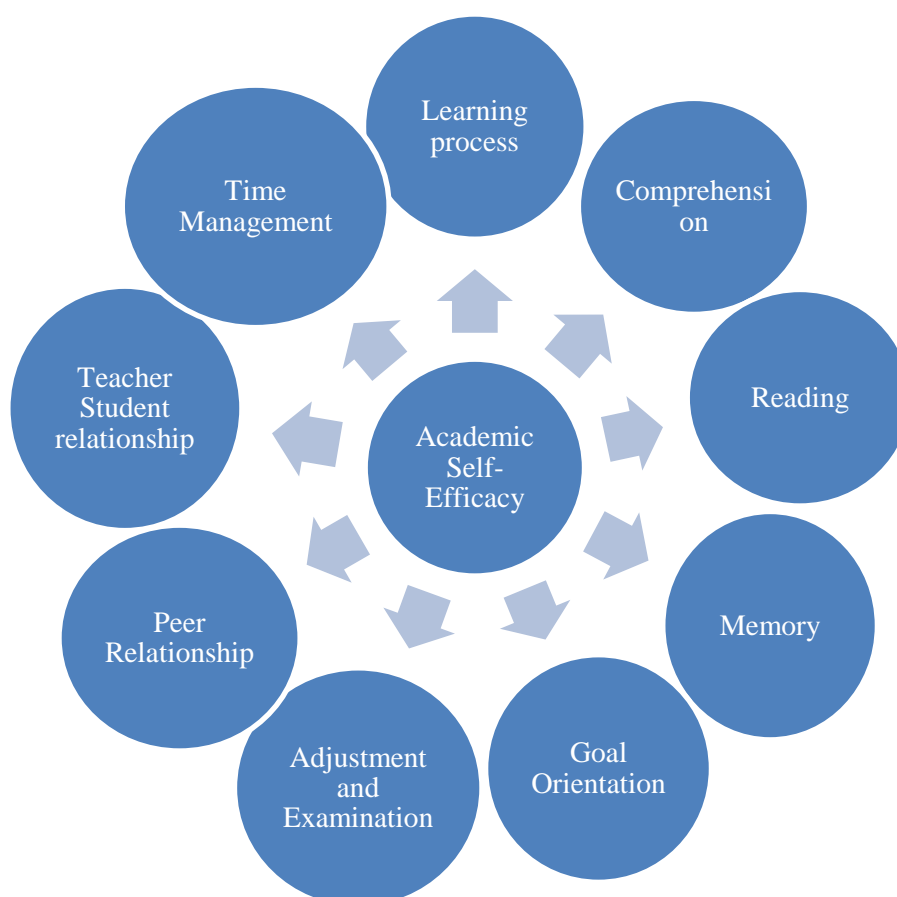


Figure-2: Dimensions of Academic Self-Efficacy

In the field of educational research, academic self-efficacy is often assessed by self-reported instruments like scales and questionnaires, where students are instructed to rate their strength of belief about won abilities (Bandura, 2006).

Practical implication of Self-Efficacy Theory

According to this theory academic achievement of students is concomitantly related with their positive identity structures. Theory also highlighted that self-efficacy affects choice of activities, efforts and persistence of students. Having low self-efficacy, students tend to be avoiding task accomplishment. Moreover, it can be hypothesized that students with higher academic self-efficacy are likely to expend more effort and they persist longer in facing difficulties for completion of tasks assigned to them (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Some researchers also recommended that teachers can boost students' self-efficacy through three primary sources i.e., mastery experience or mastery enactive, vicarious experience and verbal persuasion (Margolis and McCabe, 2006).

Providing feedback to students behaviour

As stated earlier, self-efficacy is influenced by verbal persuasions of others, like encouragement and discouragement. Verbal persuasion, an important aspect of self-efficacy which highlights the role of feedback in developing efficacy belief. Providing feedback and reward in the form of encouragement, praise can increase efficacy belief as well as interest in the student towards achieving academic goals. Teachers' explicit feedback is most important for developing self-confidence in students. Some studies involving self-efficacy theory conducted in an academic setting to explain that continuous feedback and

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encouragement can lead the students to feel mastery about the task in hand (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Therefore, teachers' role in the classroom should be to provide explicit feedback to student academic behaviour.

Individual consideration

Initially, researches conducted involving self-efficacy theory to explain that individuals with high efficacy beliefs set challenging goals, accordingly make efforts to great extent for achieving their goals, and believing their failure is the result of incomplete effort and inappropriate strategies rather than lack of ability. It should also be considered that students significantly differ from each other with respect to efficacy belief. A student may not have required efficacy belief for some specific academic behaviour or task. So, while formulating academic goals for students, their level of efficacy belief should be taken into consideration. Self-efficacy theory underlines the importance of individual attention in academic prospectus for academic goal setting, designing instructional programs and determining teaching learning methods and strategies for instruction.

Emphasis on peer modelling

According to this theory, individuals can learn a skill and behaviour by observing others. In a classroom setting, students can observe peer performance and teachers' skills, and may consider them as role models for attaining mastery over that specific performance and skills. Peer modelling among children at an early stage is helpful for attaining social and academic behaviour.

Assessing students' social loafing

Social loafing can be addressed as one of the opposite phenomena to self-efficacy. Social loafing is the concept which refers to the phenomenon where an individual puts less effort in a task working with a group, compared to when he is performing the task alone. Researches were conducted to answer why this problem is occurring in group learning and how to prevent this phenomenon. Thus, if students perceive themselves as having a high efficacy belief concerning a task, it is probable that they may work hard for the same task when performing alone. In academic prospectus, teachers can evaluate students' social loafing in group learning and accordingly individual contribution of students can be observed.

Providing guidance for developing efficacy belief

It is highlighted in previous studies that self-efficacy is positively associated with examination performance, which indicates students of higher self-efficacy tend to perform well in academic prospectus compared to students with lower academic self-efficacy. Through guidance and training, efficacy belief can be developed in students (Becher, 2009). So, in instructional setting guidance programs need to be offered for students at the higher stage of education.

CONCLUSION

By taking into account the above practical implication of self-efficacy theory in classroom setting, the study concluded that the teacher role should be to provide ample opportunities and chances to students for experiencing small wins and celebrating little successes in academic field. Peer modelling motivation, providing verbal feedback and encouragement along with helping students for building high efficacy belief will facilitate higher academic success and beyond the academic world of students. Eventually, the study concludes that implications emerged from Banduras' self-efficacy theory and findings from earlier inquiry in the line of self-efficacy makes sustainsive contribution to educational theory and practice.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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