

The Influence of a Collaborative PD Programme on Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Its Sustainability in Teaching Low Progress Learners

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KEY IMPLICATIONS

- Teachers should be aware of their deficit views about lower progress (LP) students and better understand their students' social capital to improve their lessons.
- Make it a practice in teacher education courses to elucidate teachers' deficit mindsets and address them critically to help teachers gain confidence in attending to issues faced by their LP students.

BACKGROUND

Teachers' self-efficacy (TSE) and teacher ideologies are influential in affecting teacher quality and educational outcomes. Studies investigating the effects of professional development (PD) programmes on raising in-service teachers' self-efficacy are few (Ross & Bruce, 2007; Wyatt, 2014). A more thorough review of these PD programmes reveals that research adopting qualitative research designs are absent.

Existing literature also tends to identify deficit views held by teachers about LP students. Academically, LP students are often stereotyped as disruptive, rowdy, unruly, and having short attention spans.

With a lack of literature focused on teachers' self-efficacy and their personal judgements, educators may be limited in their ability to effectively meet the cognitive, social and psychological needs of LP students. Personal limitations as such could manifest in the form of deficit views of LP students.

FOCUS OF STUDY

The goal of this project was to examine teachers' self-efficacies in the context of teaching LP students as a natural progression of their PD and their perceptions of the LP students over time. The aim was to gain insights into the experiences of teachers teaching Normal Academic (NA) and Normal Technical (NT) students, in order to provide research-informed PD programmes that emphasizes TSE that would be able to help LP students and their learning journey.

KEY FINDINGS

- Teachers' self-efficacy views about the lower progress students improved as they:
 - ◊ Developed better understanding about the LP students' differentiated needs

- ◇ Worked with the strengths and interests of the students
 - ◇ Built rapport with the students
 - ◇ Created more opportunities for student agency
 - ◇ Learnt through the modelling of other teachers
- While the teachers' self-reported efficacy may improve over time, it did not necessarily translate to more effective teaching of LP students as their apparent deficit thinking about LP students is deep rooted.
 - Most forms of deficit thinking focused on individuals rather than external conditions. The person-centred deficit views also suggested teacher disempowerment due to a sense of helplessness in changing the students and their predicaments.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

Implications for practice

Move to explicitly address deficit thinking in teaching and how teachers can leverage on students' capital to improve teachers' lesson planning.

Proposed follow-up activities

Teacher education courses can elucidate teachers' deficit mindsets and address them critically to help them feel more confident of attending to the issues confronted by their lower progress students.

PARTICIPANTS

The multi-year study worked with Arial Secondary School (pseudonym), and seven educators spanning tracks, subjects, years of experience, ages, ethnicities, and genders. These educators were recommended by the school's NT HOD and were selected as they taught at least one NT class.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a qualitative design that used the following data collection methods: Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and informative sharing sessions.

REFERENCES

- Ross, J., & Bruce, C. (2007). Professional development effects on teacher efficacy: Results of randomized field trial. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 101(1), 50–66.
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