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ABSTRACT

This study examines the comparison in self-concept and self-efficacy of pupils who are segregated and those who have been integrated as a result of the refinements to primary school streaming in 2004, with a self-report questionnaire involving 585 primary five pupils from three different ability streams in two schools.

Studies have shown that when placed in classes streamed for ability, high-ability children tend to have lower self concept, but low-ability children tend to have higher self-concept (Kulik, 1985). The findings were termed as the big-fish-little-pond effect, BFLPE (Marsh,1987). The premise of the BFLPE is that pupils in ability-streamed classes compare themselves primarily with other members of the group (social comparisons). Self-efficacy researchers have reported that students' self-efficacy beliefs are correlated with other motivation constructs such as attributions, goal setting, problem solving, self-regulation, as well as other self beliefs and expectancy constructs (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Studies have found strong correlations between self-efficacy and academic performances and achievement (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) test yielded no conclusive results between Integrated and Segregated schools but further analyses through MANOVAs followed by univariate ANOVAs suggested significant differences between streams in the Integrated school in academic self-concepts and efficacies in academic areas. No significant differences were found across streams in the Segregated school. The evidence further suggested that pupils in the Segregated school rated their self-concepts higher in all areas as compared to the other two streams, and also

appraised their self-efficacy levels higher in meeting expectations of others, enlisting parental and siblings' support and academic efficacy. These results suggested support for segregation. The findings also supported the BFLPE for low-ability pupils. These results may be explained by social comparisons.

This study also attempts to examine the associations between the variables of self-concept and self-efficacy. Findings through the Pearson product test suggested that self-concept is highly correlated to self-efficacy for the Integrated and Segregated schools. Of the various variables, academic efficacy was noted to have consistently higher correlations with both self-regulated learning and general school self-concept.

Additionally, the study looked into gender differences. Results suggested support for previous findings in the literature, that of boys having a higher self-concept in mathematics and girls for verbal reading.

Interpretations of the findings are viewed in light of past research and their educational implications form the basis of recommendations for teaching and Singapore schools.