Chapter 12
Self-Belief and Confidence to Teach Arts and Digital Technology in K-6 Classrooms:
Perspectives From Pre-Service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Teacher self-efficacy is an important motivational construct that informs actions associated with teaching. Teacher self-efficacy develops during teacher education. Highly effective teacher education is able to support and enhance self-efficacy. Variation however can occur for a number of reasons. In the case of digital technology and the arts, teacher self-efficacy informs perceived levels of competence in teaching students. This chapter reports on the current levels of teacher self-efficacy of pre-service teachers at three Australian universities. Dance, drama, music, media, visual arts and digital technology were explored. Findings highlight that the different cohorts had different levels of perceived competence. Such findings are important for teacher education and also the professional development of teachers for arts and digital technology education.

INTRODUCTION

Current literature on self-efficacy and teacher education indicates that archetypes and mentors have significant influence on an individual's ability to shift and develop confidence levels (Garvis and Lemon, 2014; Lemon & Garvis, 2013). Geoghegan, et al., (2004) also state "teacher efficacy is perception based and result orientated and is both context and subject-matter specific" (p.2). This shines light on the focus of this chapter that presents data from pre-service teachers' from three different cohorts situated in three different Australian universities (two in the state of Victoria and one in the state of Queensland)

to demonstrate self-efficacy levels across curriculum areas that are situated within the primary school curriculum. The aim is to connect the variance across different curriculum areas and how institutional focus can influence pre-service teacher perceived self-efficacy and confidence levels. We believe this in turn can shape future teachers' practice within the field across Australia.

Within Australia, a national curriculum is being rolled out for the first time across all states and territories. The goal of the national curriculum is to have consistency in what all Australian students are learning. The national curriculum has developed a list of discipline areas it deems important for student learning consisting of math, English, digital technology, science, the arts, health and physical education, geography and history. The national curriculum has been rolled out in phases to allow the nation to transition. This means that English and math were introduced in the first year, followed by science the next year and then history and geography. Currently the other areas are awaiting approval.

This chapter shares a project that had the overall aim to explore pre-service teachers levels of self-efficacy regarding areas in the national curriculum that are already being taught and delivered (math and English) with areas that are yet to be implemented (arts and digital technology). Within Australia, arts within schools consists of five disciplines. These are dance, drama, media, music and visual arts. This chapter reports on the arts and digital technology results.

Given that beliefs are resistant to change after the beginning phase of teaching, it is important to understand the current beliefs of pre-service teachers who will soon be present in Australian classrooms given the current transition with the national curriculum (Garvis & Lemon, 2014; Lemon & Garvis, 2013). Findings are therefore relevant to teacher education, school administrators and policy makers. By focusing on self-efficacy beliefs, as a collective we can focus on how best to support pre-service teachers within Australia.

This chapter explores the perceptions of pre-service teachers currently studying to become primary school teachers in three Australian universities in two different states (Victoria and Queensland). A survey was completed by 339 participants and analysed using descriptive statistics. While the findings from the study cannot be generalized to represent all of pre-service teacher in Australia, they provide important insights into the current views and perceptions about the role of arts and digital technology in schools and current levels of personal engagement with both these disciplines. These beliefs will inform a teacher's ability to implement the national curriculum. By taking a snapshot of these beliefs, we are able to predict arts and digital technology engagement in a primary school classroom. Also by understanding current levels of beliefs, pre-service teacher educators can develop suitable activities to challenge existing ideas about the arts and digital technology to promote greater acceptance and confidence.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is constructed within two conceptual strands. The first is Rotter's (1966) locus of control theoretical perspective where teacher efficacy is defined as a teacher's competence beliefs over the learning situation. The second conceptual strand is based on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory where teacher self-efficacy refers to the belief a teacher holds about their capability to carry out an instructional practice in an educational context that results in positive student outcomes. Based on the research showcasing the strong influence self-efficacy has on human behaviour (Bandura, 1997), there is strong agreement that teacher self-efficacy research should be more aligned with Bandura's theoretical perspective (Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 1998).

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