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Case Study of the Impact of Teacher Efficacy on Select PK-3 School Faculty in a South Louisiana School: A Perceptual Investigation

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**CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF TEACHER EFFICACY ON
SELECT PK-3 SCHOOL FACULTY IN A SOUTH LOUISIANA
SCHOOL: A PERCEPTUAL INVESTIGATION**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agriculture and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ILLUSTRATIONS	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Brief Historical Background and Underpinnings of Teacher Efficacy	3
Statement of the Problem	6
Overview of Teacher Efficacy	8
Learning Theories That Have the Potential to Impact Self-Efficacy	9
Research Questions	10
Summary	10
CHAPTER TWO. LITERATURE REVIEW	11
An Overview of Teacher Efficacy.....	12
Historical Depiction of Efficacy.....	13
Teacher Efficacy and the Learning Environment	15
Teacher Efficacy and Scaffolded Support	17
The Importance of Collective Efficacy and Teacher Efficacy	17
The Role of Expertise in Making a Difference in Teacher Efficacy	19
A Local View of Self-Efficacy.....	21
Professional Development.....	22
Influences on Teacher Efficacy	25
Summary	29
CHAPTER THREE. PROPOSED STUDY DESIGN	31
Definition of Key Terms	31
Why Self-Efficacy Among Teachers Is Important.....	33
Theoretical Framework	34
Restating the Purpose of the Study	36
Research Design	36
Data Sources.....	40
Procedures	43
Data Analysis	44
Researcher Positioning.....	45
Limitations	46
Summary	47
CHAPTER FOUR. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	48
Introduction.....	48
Individual Case Reports	48
Themes	50

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale	59
Addressing Research Questions	61
Summary	67
CHAPTER FIVE. IMPLICATIONS, SIGNIFICANCE, FUTURE RESEARCH.....	68
Introduction	68
Discussion of Findings	68
Implications for Practice	69
Recommendations for Future Research	71
Conclusion	73
APPENDIX A. TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	75
APPENDIX B. TEACHERS' SENSE OF EFFICACY SCALE.....	77
APPENDIX C. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL	79
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	81
VITA.....	90

ILLUSTRATIONS

Tables

1.1 Definitions of Self-Efficacy	5
2.1 Demographics of Participants	38
3.1 Data Collection Timeline	43
4.1 List of Themes, Categories, Codes, and Code Instances.....	50
5.1 Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale Average/Grade	60

Figure

3.1 Triangulation of Data Sources.....	43
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ABSTRACT

This single case study explored the perceptions, feelings, and ideas of a select group of PK-3 certified teachers in a small, south Louisiana elementary school. As educators, perceptions and opinions often go unrecognized within the central school board and in the district. In order for teachers to be successful, it is imperative they are equipped with professional development and opportunities for collaboration in order to increase their self-efficacy to become more invested. This study focused on steps to increase self-efficacy, the importance of teacher collaboration, and professional development within an elementary school. It was grounded by theoretical frameworks of self-efficacy theory, social learning theory, and social cognitive theory.

Five certified teachers agreed to participate in the study. Data were collected and analyzed using one-on-one interviews, Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), and the researcher's reflective journal. Results of teacher perceptions of efficacy revealed the following themes: Learning and Bonding, Professional Development, Structures of Efficacy, Need for Improvement, and Mandated Curriculum. Through participant perceptions and experiences, data analysis revealed that teachers identified professional development workshops, webinars, opportunities for collaboration, and grade level meetings beneficial. Teacher participants shared past and previous experiences during collaborations, cross curricular grade level meetings, and setting realistic goals for themselves and for their students. The findings of this study contained critical information on the importance of teacher perceptions- which subsequently provided critical insights on how to increase teacher self-efficacy.

CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

There are many factors which promote PK-3 teacher-efficacy. Educators are constantly shifting roles as they teach which could affect their teacher-efficacy beliefs. For example, the demands of teaching require some teachers to become second mothers or fathers, some assume roles as leaders, many are inspirators and role models, and most teachers are also nurturers and decision makers. Teaching is a complex and multifaceted profession. Pearman, et al. (2021) asserted that “individuals with a strong sense of efficacy possess characteristics of resiliency, perseverance, and motivation” (p. 81). Certainly, due to the demands of teaching, teachers are resilient, they persevere, and should be motivated to teach. Education often resembles a revolving door with concerns on how to continually promote efficacy by raising teacher confidence and focusing on student outcomes by preparing teachers to deliver more knowledgeable grade level content. Due to factors such as state and district changes, teacher expectations, turnover in curriculums, and changes in mandates, all combined, have resulted in putting a strain on teacher efficacy. In short, these swift and continual demands on teachers and subsequent changes impact how teachers portray their individual efficacy.

Through the constant changing of federal and state laws impacting education since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001) and subsequently, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2016), researchers and scholars have sought the most effective possible ways to support growth with all school age children. The various stakeholders in the educational arena all want what is best. And, while many programs and studies have been analyzed to determine positive growth in student achievement, other studies have explored the truly intrinsic side of teaching and learning – the issues and constructs and notions that motivate teachers to perform at high levels.

In the past two decades from, 2000 to 2020, researchers have investigated the relationship between self-efficacy, commitment to teaching, and increased student achievement (Abusham, 2018; Amor, et al. 1976; Ashton, 1985; Bandura, 1995; Cooper, 2010; Elstad and Christophersen, 2017; Engin, 2020; Friendman & Kass, 2002; Lunenburg, 2011; Ma & Cavanagh, 2018; Öqvist & Malmström; 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Thus, studies that explore self-efficacy in teachers are warranted, especially given the stress and demands of being a teacher in an unpredictable, pandemic environment and in an environment where fewer individuals enter the profession and shortages have become the norm.

Hattie (2012) described self-efficacy as individuals who are confident and predominate; Confident teachers possess the capacity to teach and motivate students. Confident teachers perform optimally, confidence is related to efficacy. Pearman et al. (2021) stated “the characteristics of commitment and confidence/self-empowerment surface as highly valued by teacher educators when describing self-efficacy” (p. 81). When a teacher believes in their ability to teach, possesses the requisite content knowledge, knows of and understands how to apply pedagogical practices, receives on-going professional development, and is supervised by a principal that functions as both an instructional leader and a competent manager, then that teacher typically possesses efficacy. This may seem simple, however; the ways in which teachers can achieve both confidence and efficacy is through “modeling, individual and class discussions, and reflections on real-life teaching” (Pearman et al., 2021, p.81). In any school building and on every campus, these elements intertwine, merge, and have differing impacts based on the individuals who teach in these spaces. The unique composition of faculty members can influence teachers’ efficacy in equally complex ways.

The purpose of this study was to examine in what ways a select group of teachers perceive efficacy, with an emphasis of examining these perceptions in a pandemic environment. My career as an educator, the current climate of teaching, and the unique pandemic environment converged and prompted me to consider this study.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to explore how a select group of PK-3 teachers in a south Louisiana school perceive efficacy while examining these perceptions in the context of a global pandemic. A related secondary purpose was to discern how this select group of PK-3 educators identified ways that teacher-efficacy can increase through specific practices.

Through personal interviews and an efficacy scale, I sought to determine if specific kinds of practices, including motivation and professional development, helped to promote teacher efficacy and better prepare teachers to be more efficient. I also sought to add to the body of research on the effects of how “teacher efficacy” makes a difference in an educational organization (Stein et al., 2016, p. 1002). While never imagined and unintended, examining self-efficacy in the midst of a global pandemic was a research opportunity. Thus, the uniqueness of context added an important dimension to this study.

Brief Historical Background and Underpinnings of Teacher-Efficacy

Different definitions of self-efficacy exist (Abusham, 2018; Ashton, 1985; Bandura, 1995; Elstad & Christophersen, 2017; Friendman & Kass, 2002; Ma & Cavanagh, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Historically within the broad field of education, seminal definitions of self-efficacy have operated such as Ashton’s (1985) wherein teacher efficacy is defined as teachers’ “beliefs in their ability to have a positive effect on student learning” (p. 142). Bandura (1977), is often considered a leading expert in self-efficacy due to his longevity in

the field of education. Bandura (1995) defined self-efficacy generally as the “beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 1). Similarly, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, (2001), who also examined self-efficacy in educational settings, postulated that teacher efficacy is defined as the “judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated” (p. 783). In their study, Friendman and Kass (2002) comprehensively described teacher efficacy as “motivating, imparting knowledge, values, and morals to students; managing the class, to improvise when foreseen classroom situations arise; overcome disciplinary infractions without much effort; assertiveness toward school administration; resourcefulness; and involvement within the organization” (pp. 684-685) also add much to the understanding of what is meant by teacher self-efficacy.

Teacher efficacy is also defined as individuals who believe they can obtain a specific goal (Ma & Cavanagh, 2018). According to Elstad and Christophersen (2017), adequate self-efficacy is useful for motivating individuals to engage in continued improvement. Individuals “who took part in a greater number of experiences gained greater efficacy, set higher goals, and persevered when challenged” (Abusham, 2018, p. 72). Thus, considering the various iterations of self-efficacy, yet also acknowledging the place and importance of self-efficacy within teaching, the purpose of this proposed study was to examine what teacher efficacy means and how it impacts a particular group of PreK-3 teachers in one elementary school in South Louisiana. Table 1.1 highlights definitions of self-efficacy by leaders in the education field for quick comparison in terms of publication date and constructs used to define self-efficacy.

Table 1.1 Definitions of Self-Efficacy

Definition	Researchers(s)	Year of publication
Teacher’s beliefs in their capability to positively impact student learning	Aston	1985
An individual’s beliefs in their ability to organize and perform actions required to handle given situations	Bandura	1995 (p. 1)
A teacher’s reasoning and belief of his/her capacity to produce intended outcomes of students	Tschannen-Moran and Hoy	2001
A teacher’s ability to motivate and convey “knowledge, values, and morals to students” as well as behavior management and being resourceful	Friendman and Kass	2002 (pp. 684-685)
A teacher’s skill and aptitude for motivating toward continual improvement	Elstad and Christophersen	2017
Teachers who believe they can believe they can achieve specific goals	Ma and Cavanagh	2018

For the purposes of this study, self-efficacy was defined as an individual’s beliefs, abilities, actions, values, and morals they obtain to achieve specific goals as per researchers Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) and Bandura (2005).

Statement of the Problem

There are many macro issues associated with teacher efficacy coupled with the increasing demands to raise student achievement. For instance, as an historical reference, Veenman (1984) stated that beginning teachers within the first three years have the most difficulty with classroom management and disciplinary problems; thus, managing behaviors can influence self-efficacy and may also impact student outcomes. Further, Veenman also stated that among these issues impacting efficacy are teachers who have difficulty “motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing student work, and dealing with parental relationships” (p. 1). Another issue, from the field of educational leadership, that can influence efficacy, is experiencing a positive relationship between the principal and teachers, which can also result in a higher impact on student achievement and performance (Leithwood et al., 2010). Managing behaviors, building trust with families, and acquiring deeper skills beyond what is learned in a teacher preparation program are also common issues in teaching and all can impact efficacy. On a micro level, Louisiana has its own set of challenges.

Low Academic Achievement in Louisiana

For example, the Anne E. Casey Foundation compared the U.S. fifty states in education and ranked Louisiana 48th (Hamilton, 2021). Additional indices illustrate the challenges of teaching in Louisiana public schools. For instance, in addition to Louisiana earning an education rank as 48th nationally (McCann, 2020; Hamilton, 2021), only 37% of teachers in the state of Louisiana are licensed and certified Kindergarten through 12th grade (Sentell, 2016). Hamilton (2021), reported during the Covid outbreak when schools were providing strictly remote learning, “one in six households with children (16%) did not always have access to the internet and a computer for educational purposes” (p. 3). These issues can impact a teacher’s sense of

self-efficacy, especially when some issues are beyond a teacher's control such as poverty, leadership, and parental involvement. How teachers are evaluated is also one of these issues that can impact self-efficacy but cannot be controlled by teachers. The following are specific examples.

Louisiana Teacher Evaluation System

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has dictated an observation system called COMPASS as a guide for classroom observations in grades 1-12. Culled from the work of Danielson (2007; 2008), the COMPASS system requires principals to observe teachers, using an observational tool to assess classroom quality. The COMPASS tool provides support and expectations to monitor progress and guide student learning goals (louisianabelieves.com). In tandem, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), Pianta et al. (2008) assesses young child-teacher interactions, and is another observational assessment targeted at teachers. CLASS is defined as “an observational instrument that was created to assess the classroom quality of preschool through third-grade classrooms” (Pianta et al., 2008, p.109). Pianta et al. (2008) has continued to describe CLASS as being used for accountability, planning, research, and professional development.

Teachers in the state of Louisiana are being held accountable for the way they teach and present knowledge during an observation, whether or not the content is aligned with Louisiana grade level state standards (louisianabelieves.com). And principals who are scoring teachers highly effective through unaligned lessons are not promoting or building teacher efficacy – this is a potential mismatch, but is understandable given the extreme pressure to perform in public schools as defined by standardized test scores. These specific teachers are receiving highly

effective observations with low state standard test scores. This mismatch influences teacher efficacy as one measure can point to success while other can highlight failure.

In addition to what the research has indicated, in my personal experience as a long-time educator, many teachers feel they have to teach to the test in order to better prepare their students for Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) state testing. This can also be demoralizing and impact efficacy. Given the pressures of high-stakes accountability, poverty, and observation systems such as COMPASS and CLASS that increase the pressures felt by teachers, studies that examine efficacy are needed.

Overview of Teacher Efficacy

The basic premise of self-efficacy theory is performance and motivation (Bandura, 2005). As teaching is a complex act involving knowledge of managing human behaviors, knowledge of content, and knowledge of how to motivate and engage, self-efficacy beliefs for teachers are important aspects of motivation, behavior, and influence – beliefs that teachers possess an influence on the ability to learn, to be motivated, and to successfully perform tasks (Lunenburg, 2011). Teachers who depict strong self-efficacy tend to provide a positive learning environment and enact effective classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). The classroom setting and how it is managed is a necessary element for engagement and learning to occur. According to Engin (2020), student achievement intensifies as teacher motivation and self-efficacy levels increase. Engin (2020) and Amor et al. (1976) expressed the higher the teachers' ability, the more he or she will enhance student achievement. Considering both Engin's work (2020) and the work of Amor et al. (1976), both illustrated that teacher self-efficacy is a constant, despite the breadth of years between their research and the various phases and iterations that U.S. education experienced within that same timeframe. But how can high levels

of self-efficacy be achieved? What elements are important? Are any elements universal? Or, are elements contextualized to specific situations? Most significantly, how do teachers both develop and view efficacy? Given the external and internal pressures teachers may experience, learning theory can expose and explain factors that impact self-efficacy. While a theory can be applied broadly, no single theory can adequately describe all teachers or all teaching and learning contexts.

Learning Theories That Have the Potential to Impact Self-Efficacy

Two learning theories shed light on self-efficacy and have potential to explain why teachers' possessing self-efficacy is so important. Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) depicts that people learn from one another through observations, imitation, and modeling (Bandura, 2005). Bandura's SLT has implications for teachers as they are a part of a school community. The SLT has often been called a bridge between behaviorist and cognitive learning theories because it encompasses attention, memory, and motivation (Bandura, 2005). Social learning theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interactions between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences (Bandura, 2005).

A second theory, social cognitive theory (SCT), compliments SLT. According to Goddard et al. (2004) SCT depicts teacher preferences motivated by collective efficacy beliefs. For example, weekly collaboration meetings amongst teachers can potentially provide support and strategies to increase efficacy. Similarly, continued professional development supports self-esteem and strengthens confidence (Jang, 2020). The importance of self-efficacy led me to this timely study. The US teaching force has both declined and since the late 1970s, has aged-out. (Atherton, 1978; Dohm, 2000; Ingersol et al., 2018; Parkinson, 2018; Schlechty & Vance, 1983).

My assumption was that the conditions of the pandemic may have magnified the issues surrounding teacher efficacy.

Research Questions

Teachers who are competent and have positive attitudes depict higher teacher efficacy (Akkaya & Akyol, 2016). Teachers who are confident and believe in themselves possess a higher result in regard to teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). How teachers' perceptions impact efficacy was at the heart of this study. The following research questions that framed this study were:

- Q1. What are a select group of PK-3 teachers' perceptions for increasing efficacy?
- Q2. How can mandated curricula impact efficacy among a select group of PK-3 teachers?
- Q3. Among a select group of PK-3 teachers, what role did professional development play in influencing efficacy during the pandemic?

Summary

Education in the US is important for many reasons; to further democratic principles, to instill civic duty, and as an economic driver; thus, teachers are key elements of educational attainment. Studies that examine teacher efficacy are both important and warranted. These issues have led me to this timely case study, situated in a small elementary school in south Louisiana that has experienced issues, challenges, and poverty. At the point of service delivery, teachers are of paramount concern when investigating the role of efficacy.

This chapter presented the issue of teacher efficacy and the many elements that contribute to teacher self-efficacy and established a need for studies that examine teacher efficacy. Chapter two, a literature review, explored the existing literature of factors and issues related to teacher efficacy. In chapter three of this study, the elements of a study were presented.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

While conducting this literature review, I reviewed past (foundational) and current research studies that explored self-efficacy and teachers. The literature reviews provided a review of research on the historical aspects of teacher self-efficacy, the impact of the learning environment on efficacy, the importance of scaffolded support in developing self-efficacy, collective efficacy, the role of expertise and how it influences self-efficacy, and how professional development influences efficacy. A brief discussion of how principals can impact teacher efficacy was also included. Finally, I addressed the present developments in the research to discuss the pros and cons of operative leadership in school organizations.

The following key search terms included *teacher efficacy, self-efficacy, teacher perceptions, principal perceptions, trust, attitudes, professional development, teacher quality, principal quality, student engagement, trustworthy, elementary, influence, teacher methods, positive support, learning, achievement, and effectiveness* which were used to conduct research. The main literature review search engine used in the Louisiana State University's electronic databases were Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), The Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, JSTOR, Professional Development Collection, and Google Scholar. Several key phrases were searched within the listed search engines, such as:

- efficacy and self-efficacy
- teacher perceptions on teacher efficacy or self-efficacy
- teacher attitudes and influence
- perceptions in teaching elementary
- teacher self-efficacy
- teacher quality

- teacher attitudes, teacher trust
- professional development for elementary school teachers
- positive environment in elementary schools
- elementary teacher inspiration
- teacher effectiveness

In addition, the following peer reviewed journals were accessed to ascertain scholarly research in the field:

Journal of Education and Learning, Research on Motivation in Education, Journal of School Psychology, American Educational Research Journal, Educational Researcher, Journal of Education and Training Studies, Research in Higher Education, Cambridge Journal of Education, Elementary School Journal, Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Educational Management and Administration, and School Effectiveness and School Improvement.

After some difficulty finding search engines in order to find more information on teacher efficacy, I set up a Zoom meeting with a Louisiana State University's education research librarian in order to receive assistance and more knowledge to obtain the information I needed. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we met over Zoom. She reintroduced me to the process of acquiring more information by using more definitive key words and phrases. She showed me where to find important words and how to incorporate them in finding the information I needed. I read through many abstracts as a filtering strategy in order to locate key ideas on my topic.

An Overview of Teacher Efficacy

In the next sections, literature findings on the issue of teacher efficacy, first introduced in chapter 1 are shared. Several distinct yet related areas of literature that pertain to teacher efficacy

will be shared. These areas included teacher efficacy and the learning environment, teacher efficacy and scaffolded support, collective teacher efficacy, the connection between expertise and teacher efficacy, the connections between principal effectiveness and self-efficacy, the role of professional development and teacher efficacy, the role of professional development in building teacher efficacy, and finally, specifically how teacher perceptions play a role that influences self-efficacy attainment. A historical depiction of efficacy was presented first in an effort to ground this study.

Historical Depiction of Efficacy

According to seminal researchers, teacher efficacy has been difficult to discern (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Guskey and Passaro (1994) depicted “the most difficult or unmotivated students” indicate confidence in their abilities through adequate training and experience developing strategies (p. 628). Confident teachers have the ability to teach and motivate all students. With the work of Rotter (1966) as a theoretical base, the researchers at the Rand Corporation studied the effectiveness of instruction of teacher efficacy as the extent to which teachers believed that they could control the reinforcement of their actions (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Student motivation and performance were assumed to be major sources of reinforcement for teachers. Hence, teachers who believed that they could influence student achievement and motivation were seen as assuming that they could control the reinforcement of their actions and thus having a high level of efficacy.

Bandura (1977) identified teacher efficacy as a type of self-efficacy as the outcome of a cognitive process in which people construct beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given level of competence. These beliefs affect how much effort people expend, how long they will

persist in the face of difficulties, their resilience in dealing with failures, and the stress they experience in coping with demanding situations (Bandura, 1997).

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) conducted several studies and combined the research findings. Rand, Gibson, and Dembo instruments along with the Webb Scale were used to obtain information on teacher efficacy. Ohio State, Cincinnati, and William and Mary were among the universities used to participate. The sample size ranged to over 400 participants. Research depicted teachers who were given the correct tools and support at the beginning of their teaching careers developed a stronger sense of teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Self-efficacy influences the ability to learn, motivate, and perform successful tasks (Lunenburg, 2011). The basic idea with self-efficacy theory is performance and motivation (Bandura, 2005). Bandura's social learning theory depicts people learning from one another through observations, imitation, and modeling (Bandura, 2005). According to Mehdinezhad and Mansouri (2016) in order “for teachers to increase the teaching ability and improve the quality of learning is improving the quality of teaching” (p. 52). As such, the following researchers Walker and Slear (2011), Nir and Kranot (2006), and Stags (2002) shared a commonality by stating positive experiences have an impact on the effectiveness of teacher efficacy (Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016).

There are many issues associated with teacher efficacy and the need to raise student achievement. Principals contribute to student achievement through professional community and the quality of classroom instruction. According to Leithwood et al. (2010), principals reshaped trust through counseling teachers in order to require a better, higher performance. Leithwood et al. (2010) used two different surveys which included over 3,300 teachers and 130 administrators. Leithwood et al. (2010) conducted observations in more than 150 classrooms and interviewed

more than 30 principals. A positive relationship between the principal and teachers had a higher impact on student achievement and performance (Leithwood et al., 2010). This impacted efficacy.

In order for school leaders to improve teacher efficacy and increase student achievement, they must bolster enthusiasm and inspiration within their schools (Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016). Principals must encourage the importance for teachers to acknowledge their students, individualized needs, and increasing progress into classroom planning (Szczesniul & Huizenga, 2014). While principals may be part of the self-efficacy development equation, teachers themselves are responsible for their own sense of self-efficacy. For example, teachers are part of a schools' learning environment; each should contribute to a positive environment on a campus. This is not just the responsibility of the campus leader.

Teacher Efficacy and the Learning Environment

MacNeil et al. (2009) suggested students achieve higher scores on standardized tests in schools with positive learning environments. This research was sustained through The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) and acquired from 29 high performing elementary, middle, and high schools in Southeast Texas. The test results portrayed 24,000 students with a basic rating and 17,000 teachers who completed the survey. Through their findings, MacNeil et al. (2009) reported that healthier school climates had higher achieving students.

Addressing teacher efficacy has had meaningful educational results such as teachers' persistence, enthusiasm, commitment, professional development, and instructional behavior, as well as student outcomes such as achievement, motivation, and self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Mehdinezhad and Mansouri, (2016) suggested effective teachers who are building self-efficacy are attending professional development workshops, observing grade level and cross

grade level peers, and reading up-to-date literature based on grade-level content and subjects to improve their own personal efficacy. Data was collected through correlation coefficient and regression tests from 254 teachers randomly selected by proportional sampling (Mehdinezhad & Mansouri (2016).

Öqvist and Malmström (2016) posited that teachers who demonstrate high efficacy and create a positive learning environment increase student motivation. Amor et al. (1976) articulated “teachers' sense of efficacy is only one part of the morale and commitment to teaching that we presume is a major influence on learning” (p. 35). However, building self-efficacy is dependent on the individual. Teachers, with different personalities and demeanors, have different skill sets and expertise, therefore studies that examine how self-efficacy is built are important.

Researchers have provided better, more efficient ways to improve teacher efficacy. Teachers who pose low self-efficacy depict the most problems within the classroom, typically lack a belief in self to perform the complexity of tasks involved in teaching. This may be a lack of knowledge or a struggle with some aspect of management so prevalent in teaching. For example, teaching involves imparting knowledge but in efficient ways and using familiar routines and procedures must be in place and practiced continuously from beginning to end of school (Meador, 2017). Teachers who fail to establish these classroom procedures waste a lot of instructional time and usually are dealing with behavior problems that interfere with teaching and learning (Meador, 2017). When a classroom operates efficiently with few disruptions, a teacher can teach optimally; a classroom environment that is conducive to learning results in teachers feeling a sense of worth, usefulness, effectiveness, and value in their effort. A positive teaching environment must be provided in order to incorporate scaffolding to improve academic skills and achievement scores (Meador, 2017).

Teacher Efficacy and Scaffolded Support

While the classroom environment and how it is managed are important, the ways that teachers teach and their degree of support also impact student achievement and contribute to feelings of self-efficacy. O'Connor et al. (2011) asserted that "teachers who support students in the learning environment can positively impact their social and academic outcomes" (p. 1). Jang (2020) stated, "A teacher is an important human resource of the school who has an impact on cognitive and affective growth of the students and is the key to determining whether education policies can be successfully implemented" (p. 1). Ambitious teachers interconnect with staff in order to raise student achievement (Özdoğru & Aydın, 2012). Engin, (2020) expressed motivation affects student progress and results. Thus, how a teacher interacts and engages with students is also important to both a teacher's sense of self-efficacy and to students' success. It seems student success builds self-efficacy (O'Connor et al., 2011). The majority of teachers, however, do not teach solely or in a vacuum, rather, typically, teachers are part of a faculty, a group of educators who work within a similar unit, the school campus. Thus, campus-level setting or collective efficacy is also important to consider when discussing teacher efficacy.

The Importance of Collective Efficacy and Teacher Efficacy

Teachers belong to a school community; they should not operate in an isolated fashion. Bandura (1997) conveyed, "collective efficacy is a shared belief of a group about organizing and managing action phases needed for producing skills at certain levels" (p. 477). Other researchers have also explored collective efficacy and its impact on teachers' efficacy. For example, Goddard et al. (2000) defined collective efficacy as "teachers' perceptions that their effort, as a group, can have a positive impact on students" (p. 480). Goddard et al. (2004) claimed that the impact on how a teacher presents content-level instruction and student retainment are both

impacted by “perceived collective efficacy” (p. 6). These perceptions have exceptional effects on educational results and student success (Goddard et al., 2004). Thus, collective efficacy becomes significant.

Like Goddard et al. (2000), Schwabsky et al. (2019) expressed that teachers who experience high collective efficacy are more motivated, will take greater risks, and reach higher goals. Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) illustrated how collective teacher efficacy influences student success causing teachers to be more focused on instruction and struggling students. Individuals who exhibit confidence and consistent classroom management understand these elements are a crucial necessity for efficacious teaching (Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). Thus, when teachers feel a part of a group and are productive, and experience high levels of efficacy as a collective effort, then as a result, students benefit and teachers experience feelings of self-worth and effectiveness in their ability – they experience efficacy.

Similar to the aforementioned researchers, Schwabsky et al. (2019) also investigated the element of collective efficacy as they depicted, “the higher a group of teachers’ collective efficacy, the more motivated they will be to act, take risks and achieve challenging innovation goals” (p. 249). The presence of collective efficacy can influence teachers who may struggle with an aspect of teaching. For example, there are many teachers who are not driven or ambitious to cope with classroom management (Jordan & Stanovich, 2003; Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1981). Hence, teachers play a crucial role in the learning environment by how they manage their classrooms, how they manage students, how they support student learning, and how they interact as a group; thus, collective efficacy can contribute to increased understanding of teaching elements. In addition, a principal as a collaborator can also play a role in teacher efficacy.

To illustrate the importance of collaboration and collective efficacy, Schwabsky et al. (2019) suggested, “schools with a strong sense of collective efficacy tend to perform better than more typical schools because of a pervasive sense of resolve characterized by high expectations for faculty performance, tenacity in the face of obstacles, and creativity in response to problems” (p. 249). In tandem, Kraft and Papay (2014) asserted student achievement can be raised when teacher support is present. These teachers experience results from knowing content and standards, good classroom management, and excellent instructional techniques. As teachers gain experience, they learn to meet individual needs of students and incorporate differentiated instruction (Kraft & Papay, 2014). But this is complicated and should not be oversimplified. Polikoff and Porter (2014) stated “providing teachers with more consistent messages through content standards and aligned assessments, curriculum materials, and professional development will lead them to align their instruction with the standards, and student knowledge of standards content will improve” (p. 401). Thus, alignment between curriculum and standards, having adequate resources to address standards, and student success can contribute to self-efficacy. Feeling competent as a teacher is also a factor that promotes self-efficacy. Finally, collective efficacy impacts self-efficacy.

The Role of Expertise in Making a Difference in Teacher Efficacy

While it seems like common sense that more experienced teachers are more successful, research supports this assertion and has revealed that experienced teachers tend to impact student achievement positively. Thus, expertise comes into play when discussing teacher efficacy. Ost (2014) asserted teachers who have more classroom experience make larger test score improvements than teachers with less experience. Ost (2014) also declared that teachers should switch grade levels over an extended amount of time to become more effective. This practice has

implications for elementary grades, wherein student enrollment may result in teachers being asked to move grades in response to enrollment patterns and given that elementary preparation programs typically include grades 1 through 5. Ost (2014) further revealed that teachers who remain in the same grades extensively become “bored with the content” and lose effectiveness (p. 128). Given that teachers in elementary schools may likely be asked to move to a different grade level and that research has indicated that stagnation may occur when teachers remain at a certain grade level, being supported in this movement has implications. As an example, Schwabsky et al. (2019) stated in order “to cultivate teachers’ collective efficacy, school leaders need to support teachers’ confidence that they have what it takes to reach even the most challenging students and to support their learning and success” (p. 257).

Similar to the findings of Ost (2014), Ross and Gray (2006) expressed, “The most powerful source of efficacy is mastery experience” (p. 183). Teachers who are confident, have self-beliefs, “exert extra effort” and have classroom experiences are more successful (Ross & Gray, 2006, p. 180). Ross and Gray (2006) also stated that principals who provide opportunities for professional development, new content knowledge, setting and achieving goals with positive teaching outcomes “can increase mastery experiences” (p. 184). Furthermore, Ross and Gray (2006) claimed that through encouragement, observations of co-workers, and positive guidance, principals can increase collective teacher efficacy and beliefs.

Returning to the construct that teachers do not teach in isolation, the school leader’s role in self-efficacy development is important to consider but, other multi-faceted factors that contribute to teacher efficacy such as classroom environment, experience, feeling effective, and collective efficacy emerge as the factors that impact self-efficacy to a greater degree. Several researchers have explored these connections. For instance, Cooper (2010) claimed teachers who

exhibit profound empathy depict a “deeper understanding and higher quality relationship” with their students (p. 87). Cooper (2010) also stated teachers who express empathy are more caring and focused to meet the needs of their students. How then, do relationships impact self-efficacy and subsequent teaching and student success? Is empathy an ingredient of self-efficacy? And, what other factors might contribute to self-efficacy? These questions illustrate the complexity of teacher efficacy.

A Local View of Self-Efficacy

There are several issues associated with poor teacher efficacy in Louisiana elementary schools and the need to raise teacher skills in order to raise student achievement appears linked. Students are not being taught to the best of their ability and because of this, they lack knowledge, social development or skills, and subsequently experience lower achievement scores. A significant factor that contributes to this is unqualified teachers. Teacher self-efficacy has proven to be powerfully related to many meaningful educational outcomes such as teachers’ persistence, enthusiasm, commitment, professional development, and instructional behavior, as well as student outcomes such as achievement, motivation, and self-efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). In the current reform-fueled, high-stakes environment, teachers are being held accountable through their performance in the classroom and end of the year test scores.

According to Goroshit and Hen (2014), some teachers may experience emotional self-efficacy which may affect their performance. Summers et al. (2017) stated teachers with high expectations for success tended to have students who perceived closeness and low conflict at the beginning of the year. Teachers in the 21st century are faced with many challenges and are assigned many different roles to meet the expectations of students, parents, and the school community. There is a significant positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and job

satisfaction (Türkoglu et al., 2017). Simply put, a positive relationship, feeling like you have worth, and knowing your craft can build self-efficacy. As an example, teachers who exhibit high teacher-efficacy engender positive attitudes toward students, typically express less anxiety, and have an extensive teaching career. (Stein et al., 2016, p. 1005). In Louisiana, the stress level of testing has continued to rise due to state observations and accountability efforts. As educators, we must absolutely love our job despite the pressures in order to provide the best possible education to our students. A key factor is continued growth as a teacher, professional development often can provide that growth.

Professional Development

As educators, our one common goal is to prepare our students with literacy skills and college readiness (Smith & Robinson, 2020). An effective professional development utilizes successful practice that both promotes teacher learning and supports student achievement. Professional development constantly deepens knowledge and skills to remain effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The most traditional form of professional development is in-service training. Ideas and examples are with shared teachers who are expected to participate in “workshops, colloquia, demonstrations, role-playing, and simulations” (Karimi, 2011, p. 55). Effective teachers who are building self-efficacy are attending professional development workshops, observing grade level and cross grade level peers, reading up-to-date literature based on grade-level content and subjects to improve their own personally efficacy (Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016). Karimi (2011) expressed, “Observations and assessments are another model of professional development that involves colleagues who provide feedback based on observations about the performance of fellow educators. Both the observers and the observed learn from the

process” (p. 55). Friendman and Kass (2002) who comprehensively described teacher efficacy as, “motivating, imparting knowledge, values, and morals to students; managing the class, to improvise when foreseen classroom situations arise; overcome disciplinary infractions without much effort; assertiveness toward school administration; resourcefulness; and involvement within the organization” (pp. 684-685), also added much to the understanding of what is meant by teacher self-efficacy. Thus, as teachers are individuals and have unique needs, professional development can and should be differentiated.

Cohen and Hill’s (2000) foundational research articulated that in order to improve student outcomes, increase student achievement, develop the practice classroom procedures, and enrich instruction, teachers need quality and meaningful professional development. In their study, data was collected from 1,000 5th grade elementary students in California. Cohen and Hill (2000) employed surveys and the California Learning Assessment System Scores (CLASS). The research provided a positive correlation that improving student achievement is connected to teachers being more prepared to teach assigned grade level content (Cohen & Hill, 2000). Similar to Cohen and Hill (2000), Kars and Inandi (2018) claimed that professional development practices also impact teachers who influence student outcomes. However, Yoon et al., (2007) research was based on professional development and its connection to student achievement. A randomized control design was used in order to prove that teachers who received up to 50 professional development hours could raise students’ achievement by 21%. These researchers also provided,

Professional development affects student achievement. It enhances teacher knowledge and skills, better knowledge and skills improve classroom teaching, and improved teaching raises student achievement. If one link is weak or missing, better student learning cannot be expected. If a teacher fails to apply new ideas from professional development to classroom instruction, for example, students will not benefit from the teacher’s professional development (p. 4).

In a similar vein to Yoon et al. (2007), Jacob et al. (2017) posited the following regarding the efficacy of professional development for teachers:

Professional development is commercially available on a wide scale. Professional development is designed to improve teachers' knowledge for teaching and to enable them to elicit more student thinking and reasoning during lessons. Specifically, it focused on helping teachers (a) learn more on content and subjects, (b) understand how children learn, (c) use formative assessment to develop insight into what specific students know and do not know, and (d) develop effective classroom instructional strategies that enable student problem solving. There was limited evidence of positive impacts on teachers' knowledge for teaching, but no effects on instructional practice or student outcomes (p. 397).

Similarly, Jacob et al. (2017) conducted research on 105 teachers in 4th and 5th grades over a 3-year period in low-income schools within one district. Jacob et al. (2017) revealed that the impact of professional development was on teachers' increased content knowledge. Like Jacob et al. (2017), Diamond et al. (2014) affirmed that teacher knowledge of content is an important construct. Diamond et al. (2014) used a cluster randomized trial design in several Southeastern United States schools that had an average of 77% free lunch students and 12% of English Language Learners (ELL) students. The study was conducted in 64 schools that were randomly selected from over 200 schools with 5th grade science students. The participants consisted of about 200 elementary teachers who at the beginning of the study showed gaps due to poor preparation and knowledge of science content. At the one-year study, there was a 27% increase for teachers who attended professional development throughout the year and a 7% increase on classroom management. Data was collected using questionnaires, observations, and a Science Knowledge Test (Diamond et al., 2014).

Thus, while some research has indicated that professional development can increase teaching knowledge and capacity and may impact student outcomes, how professional development specifically influences teacher efficacy is still unclear. More importantly, given the

complex nature of leadership and teaching, and the elements that seem to emerge as influential such as classroom environment, teacher content knowledge, teacher skill, relationships, trust, school climate, and the role of professional development, models of leadership have also developed that include elements of efficacy.

Influences on Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is influenced by principals and other teachers as evidenced by the scholarship on collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Goddard et al., 2000; Schwabsky et al., 2019; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). There is increasing stress and pressure to continually improve student achievement, spurred by the passage of NCLB in 2001, intensified by the passage of ESSA in 2016, and subsequent high stakes testing. Valentine and Prater (2011) examined the association between instructional and transformational leadership and the connection to raise student achievement. Surveys were sent through email to over 450 high schools. Participants who agreed to take the surveys were 155 high school principals across the state of Missouri. The data were collected from MAP testing and analyzed to determine students who met their state benchmark goals. The findings of Valentine and Prater (2011), suggested when schools were grouped according to principal leadership factors, there were differences in student achievement. Principals were fostering improvement with curriculum and instruction. Higher achievement was attainable through consistent, transformational leadership abilities (Valentine & Prater, 2011).

Positive Effects

Many factors have had an impact on teachers' self-efficacy. For example, Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) depicted "Collective teacher efficacy (CTE), which refers to the collective perception that teachers make an educational difference to their students over and above the educational impact of their homes and communities" (p. 189). Data were collected

through convenience sampling and analyzed using multiple regression. Results arrived from 66 middle schools' grades 6-8 in Virginia. Through Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) findings, they suggested students must “transfer from school to work to a global workplace” (p. 189). The researchers also expressed a positive connection “between CTE and student achievement” (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004, p. 189). There were positive associations and relationships were found between “instruction and discipline subscales of CTE with all student achievement” (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004, p. 189).

As another example, Eginli (2009) also found a positive relationship between efficacy, by reporting results that “schools maintaining positive and healthy relationships between principals and teachers, and that expedites and contributes to student academic success” (p. 2). Eginli (2009) suggested a relationship between teacher efficacy and principal leadership. Data were collected through surveys, questionnaires, and the Teachers Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) from 260 K-12 teachers with Master’s Degrees in a public university in Washington, D.C. Participation was voluntary with teachers who had more than 3 years teaching experience. Eginli (2009) used a descriptive survey research design, with multiple regression analyses, and a quantitative response to depict outcomes.

Further, Hallinger and Heck (2010), Silins and Mulford (2002), Leithwood et al. (2010), Seashore et al. (2010) suggested shared and instructionally focused leadership are complementary approaches for improving schools” (p. 315). Thus, going beyond the notion of a single school leader, the principal, and looking at the concept of how efficacy can be built through shared leadership designs, teachers can build self-efficacy when they share in leadership within a school community.

Finally, the factor of the school environment and the classroom environment are significant elements that impact self-efficacy. MacNeil et al. (2009) investigated “whether exemplary, recognized and acceptable schools differ in their school climates” (p. 13). Furthermore, MacNeil et al. (2009) stated that schools with healthier learning environments produced higher standardized test scores. Thus, when children achieved, teachers acquired a sense of self-efficacy.

Negative Effects

Teacher efficacy has proven to be powerfully related to many meaningful educational outcomes such as teachers’ persistence, enthusiasm, commitment and instructional behavior, as well as student outcomes such as achievement, motivation, and student self-efficacy beliefs (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). However, persistent measurement issues have plagued researchers studying teacher efficacy. Many different measures have been used to identify the construct (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Disagreements within the field have surfaced over the lack of clarity in measuring constructive questions about teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

McGuigan and Hoy (2006) attempted to clarify the cause of disagreement, and stated, “Educational researchers have tried to identify school properties that make a difference in student achievement and overcome the negative influence of low socioeconomic status” (p. 203). Thus, despite general agreement that efficacy is an important construct, how best to measure its effect has been elusive. The following studies attempted to illustrate the problematic nature of the causal relationship between leadership practice at the school level, the impact on teachers, and student outcomes. Bandura (1997) suggested through his research that people who experience burn out were more subjected to stressful working conditions and environments.

While the influence of a principal as an instructional leader is an important aspect of schools, it remains unclear how principals can best influence teacher efficacy which in turn, has an impact on student outcomes. One area, trust, has emerged as a crucial starting point for teachers.

Building Trust

Price et al. (2015) researched the influence of trust in principals as well as trust in principal behavior, how that might impact school climate, and ultimately, the subsequent effect on student achievement and teacher efficacy. The participants consisted of over 3,000 teachers in 64 elementary, middle, and high schools within 2 districts. Data were analyzed by using correlation and regression. According to Price et al. (2015), principals must depict both interpersonal and task-oriented behaviors in order to earn the trust of teachers. “Schools will not be successful in fostering student learning without trustworthy school leaders who are adroit in nurturing academic press, teacher professionalism, and community engagement” (p. 66). Simply put, as educational leaders, principals establish, foster, nurture, and maintain trust in order to lead schools effectively.

Trust can be very critical when improving a school organization. Trust may affect the teachers or faculty commitment or attitudes. Balyer (2017) conducted a qualitative research design and found there was little research reported on trust. Balyer (2017) used thirty teacher participants chosen through a criterion sampling in schools located in Turkey. Balyer (2017) reported trust was an important factor and has great influence on teacher performance. The outcome of this research illustrated that the participants did not trust the principal within their organization. In essence, principals, teachers, and students must develop trust and respect in each other in order to keep a positive atmosphere with the organization (Balyer, 2017). Principals must develop trust by encouraging reliability, competence, sincerity, and involvement within the

faculty in order to build a successful organization. However, teachers have little influence over who becomes their principal. Further, while this body of research that has examined the principal's influence on self-efficacy is important, how teachers can influence their own self-efficacy seems more important. Only a brief discussion of studies that addressed how principals can impact teacher efficacy was included in this review. Thus, this literature review focused on teacher efficacy and the learning environment, teacher efficacy and scaffolded support, collective teacher efficacy, the connection between expertise and teacher efficacy, the role of professional development in building teacher efficacy, and finally, how teacher perceptions play a role that influences self-efficacy attainment.

Summary

Chapter 2 contained a review of literature that framed the issue of teacher efficacy and the many elements that contribute to teacher efficacy. Some elements like being content-savvy, understanding effective pedagogical practices, learning how to manage behaviors, and understanding the intricacies of working with families and within communities, are within a teacher's control. Conversely other elements, such as a principal's leadership style and state-mandated assessments, are beyond an individual teacher's control. Tracing the historical aspects of teacher self-efficacy provides background while the impact of the learning environment on efficacy emerged as important. Other elements included the importance of scaffolded support in advancing self-efficacy, the importance of collective efficacy, the function of experience and how it influences self-efficacy. The positive effects of teacher efficacy are associated with collective efficacy. Environment (classroom and campus) as well as content knowledge and behavior management skills all relate to teachers acquiring self-efficacy. Professional Development builds on previously acquired teaching skills and builds on knowledge based on

grade level content (Jacob et al., 2017), hence, professional development has had the potential to contribute to self-efficacy in teachers. Chapter Two, a literature review, explored the existing literature of factors and issues related to teacher efficacy.

In chapter 3 of this study, the elements of the present study were presented. As previously stated, education in the U.S. is important for many reasons – to further democratic principles, to instill civic duty, and as an economic driver; thus, teachers have emerged as key elements of educational attainment. Studies that examined teacher efficacy are both important and warranted. These complex issues have led me to this timely case study, situated in a small elementary school in south Louisiana.

CHAPTER 3. PROPOSED STUDY DESIGN

This study examined select Pk-3 teacher perceptions, experiences, and motivations on their career choice, and how efficacy plays an important role within the education system. The key terms presented relate to PK-3 teacher perceptions on self-efficacy. Given the uniqueness of every school, a single case study design was deemed most appropriate for such a study. While the results cannot be generalized due to the small sample size and to the uniqueness of the setting, nevertheless, the findings from this proposed study may be of value to schools of similar configuration. Researching self-efficacy within a pandemic environment was timely and relevant as well.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, several terms were used that were specific to the study. The following terms were germane to this proposed study. Terms were presented here with citational authority.

Compass Observations. “The Compass Information System (CIS) is a web-based system that is available to districts and charter schools to support their implementation of Compass, the state's educator support and evaluation system” (retrieved from [https://www.louisianabelieves.com/academics/compass/compass-information-system-\(cis\)](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/academics/compass/compass-information-system-(cis))).

Collective Efficacy. Collective efficacy refers to the shared belief of a group of individuals about the organization and management as well as the action phases that are necessary for producing skills at optimal levels (Bandura, 1997). Collective efficacy contributes to teacher efficacy within a school campus.

Distributed leadership. Distributed leadership contributes to school improvement and improves student learning outcomes. This style can best be described by the following “concentrates on

engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organization rather than seeking this only through formal position or role” (Harris, 2004, p. 13).

Emotional self-efficacy. “Emotional self-efficacy refers to peoples' judgment regarding their own capacity to process emotional information accurately and effectively. Emotional self-efficacy is considered a powerful variable affecting the emotional state of individuals and their performance” (Goroshit & Hen, 2014, p. 26).

In-service training. In-service training or professional development is offered to teachers who have teaching positions, often as a faculty-wide endeavor. “In-service training is the most common or conventional form of professional development. It often occurs during a predetermined period of time during which a presenter leads and shares ideas and expertise to participant teachers. This may appear in several formats like workshops, colloquia, demonstrations, role-playing, and simulations. In-service training is considered a cost-effective model since large groups of educators are reached at once” (Karimi, 2011, p. 55).

Observation/assessment. Observation/assessment is a form of PD that involves “colleagues who provide feedback based on observations about the performance of fellow educators. Both the observers and the observed learn from the process” (Karimi, 2011, p. 55).

Professional Development. Professional development is the specific training that in service teachers receive in order to increase content knowledge and teaching capacity. An effective professional development plan utilizes effective practice that promotes continued teacher learning that ultimately results in supporting student achievement. Professional development should be on-going in that it constantly deepens knowledge and skills in order for teachers to remain effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Profound empathy. Profound empathy is “frequency of interaction, fundamental empathy can become profound, resulting in deeper understanding and higher quality relationships where teachers demonstrate personal levels of care and concern and model morality to students.

Empathy is being sensitive towards the needs of the child...trying to treat each one of those as a little human being as opposed to a pupil—so they all have different needs, different attitudes” (Cooper, 2010, p. 87).

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is important element or condition of teaching as it motivates and encourages teachers to perform at optimum levels Self-efficacy, explains that it “refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1995 p. 1).

Teacher Commitment. Individuals who are committed to an organization and improving that organization. Ross and Gray (2006) describe this attribute as, “willingness to exert effort for the organization”, such as, “willingness to work collaboratively on school tasks” (p. 185).

Teacher Efficacy. Teacher efficacy is a self-reflective process. Teacher efficacy is defined as a teacher’s “judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 783).

Why Self-Efficacy Among Teachers Is Important

Self-efficacy beliefs are important aspects of motivation, behavior, and influence. Self-efficacy influences the ability to learn, motivate, and perform successful tasks (Lunenburg, 2011). For teachers, self-efficacy is important in that it motivates and encourages teachers to perform at optimum levels. The higher the quality of a teacher’s performance, the higher likelihood that students will also perform well and be successful.

Theoretical Frameworks

Three primary theoretical frameworks were selected to undergird this study. Each framework contributed to the understanding of how teacher efficacy impacts teaching and learning and how a faculty can work together toward a shared vision. The three theories that provided a framework for this study were self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 2005) and social learning theory (Bandura, 2005) which were briefly introduced in chapter 1. Social cognitive theory (Ashford & LeCroy, 2010; Bandura, 2005) believed teachers are life-long learners who encourage and develop life-long learning among their students.

Self-Efficacy Theory

The basic premise of self-efficacy theory is performance and motivation (Bandura, 2005). Because teachers are charged with motivating learning so that students perform at their highest potential, it is paramount that teachers are motivated to teach and that they perform at a high-quality level. The cyclical nature of teaching and learning deemed self-efficacy theory as appropriate.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura's social learning theory has illustrated how people learn from one another through observations, imitation, and modeling (Bandura, 2005). Frequently described as a bridge between behaviorist and cognitive learning theories, because social learning theory encompasses attention, memory, and motivation (Bandura, 2005). Social learning theory helped to explain and provide understanding of human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. (Bandura, 2005). As Tsui (2018) declared that "efficacy influences how much effort a teacher is willing to invest before, during, and after a

class” (p. 107), social learning theory was also an applicable choice in terms of a theory for framing this proposed study.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory is three dimensional and encourages change, promotes development, and supports adapting (Bandura, 2005), activities and situational contexts that encompass teaching. “Self-Efficacy was developed as part of the social learning theory (Ashford & LeCroy, 2010), which has progressed and evolved into the social cognitive theory (Levin et al., 2001). Social Cognitive Theory was presented by Bandura in response to his dissatisfaction with behaviorism” (Slaughenhou, 2016). Social cognitive theory explains that people with a high self-efficacy are highly motivated, characteristically display a high degree of being confident, and are typically prepared for their job responsibilities. These particular people set and meet personal goals at a higher level than individuals who do not possess self-efficacy.

These three theories converged to provide a framework for investigating this study. Each theory contributed to understanding the complexity of teacher efficacy. Teachers who are competent and have positive attitudes depict higher teacher efficacy (Akkaya & Akyol, 2016). Teachers who are confident and believe in themselves possess increased teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The following research questions proposed for this study are:

- Q1. What are a select group of PK-3 teachers’ perceptions for increasing efficacy?
- Q2. How can mandated curricula impact efficacy among a select group of PK-3 teachers?
- Q3. Among a select group of PK-3 teachers, what role did professional development play in influencing efficacy during the pandemic?

Restating the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how a select group of PK-3 teachers in a south Louisiana school perceived efficacy. Specifically, I sought to determine what factors help to promote self-efficacy and teacher efficacy perceptions, to better prepare teachers to be more efficient, and what changes can be made to ensure PK-3 elementary students are presented with positive learning environments to increase learning. This research was conducted in a pandemic environment which was unpredictable with school closures, personal stressors, and the uncertainty and lack of familiarity which forced teaching electronically, so how that impacted self-efficacy became important. The pandemic was COVID-19. According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) “COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, a coronavirus discovered in 2019. The virus spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Adults 65 years or older are at a higher risk” (retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/dotw/covid-19/index.html>).

Research Design

This single case study (Yin, 2018) focused on the real-life phenomena of teacher efficacy in the teaching profession. Through the use of interviews (one to one), researcher’s journal, and responses to the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), my goal was to better understand what contributed to and sustained teacher efficacy in a particular and unique setting. As a teacher of twenty years, I chose to conduct a single case study in order to report new information about teacher efficacy. A single case study research design was appropriate for the research questions given the uniqueness of the setting. I interviewed PK-3 teachers in a small, Louisiana public elementary school. As a qualitative research design, case studies help to understand, describe, and explain different theories (Morse & Field, 1996).

According to Yin (2018) case study design is an empirical method that attempts to understand a contemporary phenomenon within a real-world context.

Setting and Context

The research was conducted in a small community school in south Louisiana where I, as the researcher, live and work. During this study (2022, Spring) approximately 252 children were enrolled, with 89% identified as economically disadvantaged. This school was a PK-5 elementary school with a limited number of certified teachers. There were a total of 16 teachers in grades PreK, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth, including two resource teachers. Only eight teachers were certified for teaching their grade level, certification rate of 50% overall at this research site. The school was located in a town of approximately 6,960 residents in rural South Louisiana.

Participants

The participants for this study worked in a public elementary school. For the purpose of this single case study, I was interested in the perceptions of elementary school PK-3 certified teachers. As the researcher, I interviewed a certified teacher in every grade level to acquire each individuals' true perceptions of teacher efficacy and how they viewed their own self-efficacy, utilizing the Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moral & Hoy, 2001).

This small south Louisiana elementary school had a collage of many personalities. Some teachers were excited and had been there many years, while others were in the first year of teaching and appeared to be "running out the doors." The lack of consistency and communication has tended to scare many new teachers off and out the double doors to which they once entered enthusiastically. The few who have remained offer support to each other and have continued to hope for positive change with the arrival of each new incoming principal.

Sampling

Based on the work of Collins et al., (2007), many purposive sampling schemes can be used for research studies. For this study, two schemes – criterion and convenience – were appropriate. Criterion was selected as teachers who agreed to participate must teach children in grades PK through 3rd grade and possess five years’ experience. In addition, convenience was also appropriate as target participants who were teaching in a parish (county) public school system in proximity to the university setting. In Table 2.1 participants were detailed. In order to shield the identities of the participants, pseudonyms were used.

Table 2.1 Demographics of Participants (PK-3 Teachers).

Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Subject Taught	Grade Taught	Years of Experience	Grade Level Certification	Degree
Emma	Female	White	All	PreK	9	PreK-3	Bachelor
Helena	Female	White	ELA	K	15	K-8 Physical Education and Health	Bachelor
Alex	Female	Black	Math	1	7	1-5	Bachelor Master’s in Curriculum and Instruction Education Specialist
Brin	Female	White	Math	2	22	K-8	Bachelor
Charlie	Female	Black	Math, S, SS	3	13	1-5	Bachelor Master’s in Education

Emma

Emma was a White female with nine years teaching experience within two public schools. She graduated mid-year from University of Lafayette and has a PK-3 certification. Her first teaching job started in January and was in a third-grade classroom. She did not like the age group or school in general. In August she took a Kindergarten position at a different school, but within the same district. She taught Kindergarten for two years and first grade for one year. Then she moved into PreK where she has remained for five years. She stated she loves professional development, especially webinars. She also stated she will continue to teach PK until she retires.

Helena

Helena was a White female with 15 years teaching experience in one public school. She is certified in K-8 and physical education-health (P.E.). She taught P.E. for 6 years. Her favorite P.E. class was Kindergarten so she took a Kindergarten position at the same school where she has been in the same classroom for nine years. She was also the special events chairperson. Her duties with this committee included school t-shirt designs and orders, fun days, spring/fall festivities, and gradations.

Alex

Alex was a Black female with 7 years teaching experience in two public schools. Her first job was at a local elementary school where she worked as a paraprofessional in a Kindergarten classroom for two years while she worked on her Bachelors and certification. She's been in a first-grade classroom as a certified teacher for seven years. She decided she may not want to remain in the classroom forever so attended Grand Canyon University online to earn her Master's Degree and Education Specialist Certification. At the time of this study, she was currently studying for the principal leadership test to become a principal in the next few years.

Her end goal was to eventually move into the school board office where she can share her experiences and lead future teachers.

Brin

Brin was a White female with 22 years teaching experience in several public schools with a degree from University of Lafayette in Child and Development Studies. She has been at this small Louisiana public school for seven years teaching second-grade. She was certified in grades K-8 and had no interest on going back to school for her Master's degree. She stated she loved teaching and being in the classroom.

Charlie

Charlie was a Black female with 13 years teaching experience. She earned a Bachelor's degree from University of Lafayette in Behavioral Science with a minor in Business. She also attended Grand Canyon University online and obtained her Master's degree in Early Child Education. She was certified in grades 1-5 and preferred upper grade levels. She had been teaching third grade for nine years. She stated "third graders are young enough to mold and old enough to be independent. It is the perfect grade for me". Her long-term goal is to eventually work on her Doctorate but she stated she was too busy to focus on that at the moment.

Data Sources

A single case study research methodology was used to collect data through multiple measures (Yin, 2018). The data sources used to address the research questions in this study were one-on-one personal interviews, researcher's journal, Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), and resultant teacher perceptions. Data were collected over a period of several weeks during the spring semester of the 2021-2022 school year through

personal interviews that were recorded and transcribed using an Apple MacBook Air. Data sources included interviews, the efficacy scale responses, and a researcher's journal.

Interviews (Refer to Appendix A)

A primary data source for this study was one-on-one interviews with certified teachers who have been in the education system five years or longer, teaching PK-3rd grade. The purpose was to obtain information and compare individual perceptions on how the teachers felt about teacher efficacy and how it leads into a personal self-efficacy. Interviews were conducted in my classroom with five different grade level certified teachers. Due to Covid-19, Zoom interviews were offered to participants so interviews could still be conducted if they were uncomfortable even with six-foot social distancing. All five-grade level certified teachers preferred personal interviews. Interviews contained open ended questions in order for the researcher to obtain more information on the participant's perceptions of efficacy. The interview questions (See Appendix A) guided participants to share reflective personal and professional experiences as educators. Participants were informed that interviews are private and would not be shared or discussed with anyone. Pseudonyms were used to protect identities. Some interview questions were adapted from Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2001) efficacy scale. As a form of member checking (Patton, 1990) interview transcripts were shared with each participant so they could either agree to what has been transcribed, or they could elect to delete portions of responses. Before the researcher conducted the interview, participants were shown a simple recorded text to understand their responses were being recorded.

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001)

Each participant completed a Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Responses were compared to interview data. Using multiple data sources achieved

triangulation. Nightingale (2009), defined triangulation as “an analysis technique used in a research design” (p. 489). Examining teacher interview data and data generated from responses to an efficacy scale promoted a better understanding of participants individual teacher efficacy. This depicted how each certified teacher portrayed their own efficacy. All participants completed a Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) long form *Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale* that had 24 questions scored from one to nine.

Researcher’s Journal

The researcher’s journal was used to record my thoughts, responses from efficacy scales, ideas about efficacy, participants, and the study itself. In this reflective research journal, I recorded my thoughts and responses as well as ideas that transpired before, during, and after the one-on-one interviews. I used this reflective research journal to record any notes, ideas, or information that was obtained from scale responses as a means of being sure I captured impressions and thoughts and as a way to be more systematic and organized.

Using multiple data sources achieved triangulation and increased internal validity. Multiple data sources allowed me to triangulate data by comparing and cross-checking (Merriam, 2009). Nightingale (2009), defined triangulation as “an analysis technique used in a research design” (p. 489). Figure 1.1 illustrated triangulation of data sources, while Table 3.1 highlighted the spring 2022 data collection timeline.

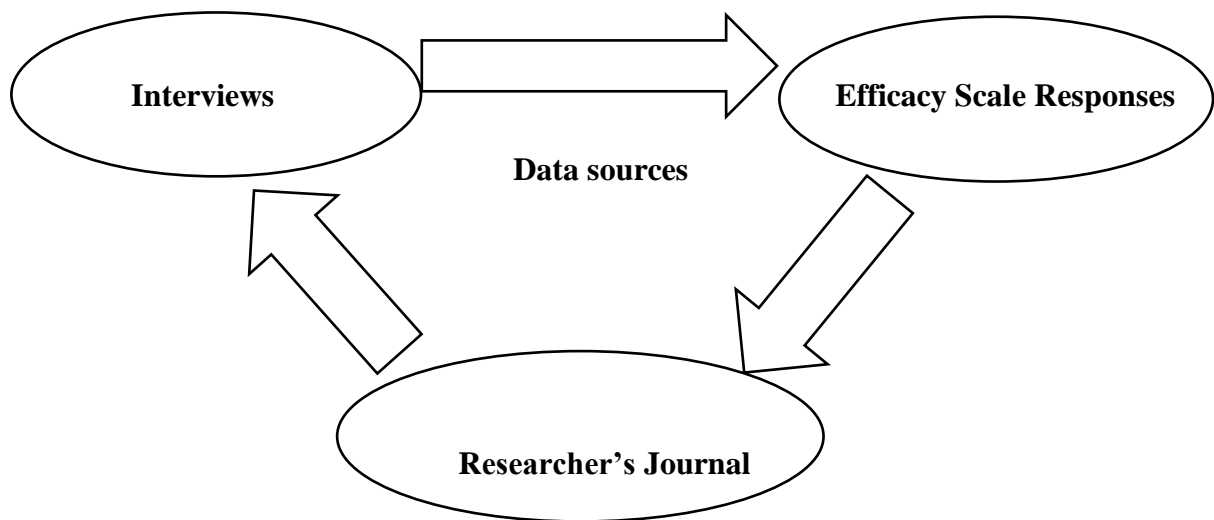


Figure 3.1 Triangulation of Data Sources

Table 3.1 Data Collection Timeline.

Data source	Collection
Interviews	May, 2022
Scale Responses	May, 2022
Researcher's Reflective Journal	May-July, 2022

Procedures

One teacher in each grade level from PK-3 (5 teachers) was invited to participate and signed consent as per the researcher's approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedure was obtained (see Appendix C). Teachers had a choice to decide if they wanted to volunteer to participate in the study; each teacher agreed and remained as participants throughout the study. The qualitative interviews were recorded and transcribed using a password protected, encrypted

file, stored on the researcher's MacBook Air. The following demographics captured were: (1) gender, (2) racial identity, (3) subject matter being taught, (4) grade level, (5) years' experience, and (6) certification in grade level as presented in Table 1.

Data Analysis

Transcripts from interviews, entries in the researcher's reflective journal, and efficacy scale response were analyzed. As a researcher, I completed all editing of transcripts and coding of transcribed data. Transcripts were verified by reading texts while listening to recorded interviews. This was done to verify that the transcriptions were accurate representations of interviews. Data was open coded, applying descriptions to data, line-by-line as per Saldaña's phase coding procedure (2021), using an inductive coding method.

Phase coding took place (Saldaña, 2021) as initial coding of data was considered the first cycle, which was an open-ended process. Once the interviews were completed, I coded the transcript data as a process of reducing all of the text into smaller pieces of information. According to Saldaña (2021), coding is descriptive labeling of data which was my process as I took entire transcripts, read them, and coded the most salient sections. I began phase 1 coding by assigning descriptive words, terms, and phrases to words and phrases of the transcript as I read each response. I conducted coding as a line-by-line process. This same coding process was employed with reflective journal entries. I also kept a code book in order to not duplicate codes or assign codes in a disorganized manner as I moved between transcripts and my reflective journal, and as I moved between different interview transcripts.

In phase 2 coding (Saldaña, 2021), I reviewed transcripts a final time, and codes were reviewed and those that were similar were merged. I conducted this phase 2 coding collapsing similar codes to the point of saturation, which is when codes did not overlap. As an example, I

merged the codes of compassion, understanding, and considerate into a final code of compassionate understanding. Also, in phase 2, I grouped related codes into code categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Saldaña, 2021).

Once all data were coded, I returned to the data and created categories from codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Saldaña, 2021). In this process, codes were put in organized code categories as per Saldaña, (2021). Finally, themes were assigned to each of the code categories. In my final data analysis, I organized and interpreted the findings into themes (Creswell, 2014, 2015). To achieve trustworthiness, as a researcher, I secured a peer to read the data and compared the peer's results to my previous coding. Between myself and my peer, there was an approximate 93% alignment. Peer coding also added to trustworthiness.

Researcher Positioning

As a classroom teacher of twenty years, I was aware of how my position could influence my interactions and interpretations with chosen participants in this study. As a researcher, I applied my knowledge, years of experience, and education to this study as a filter of the data and data analysis. I am not just the researcher, but also a member of the PK-3 teacher faculty who were my eventual participants. I teach first grade Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) Knowledge, Skills, and Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA). The School Board controls the pacing charts for Knowledge and Skills, and IRLA is taught in color-coded groups.

As a way to contextualize teaching in this setting, I elected to describe this process. Each student is tested according to their word knowledge recognition and reading level. Then based on their ability they are ranked by grade level, which is color coded. An example is blue is first grade reading level, red is second grade reading level, white is third grade reading level, etc.

Students are then grouped into groups according to color levels. There are teacher manuals, also known as tool kits, which have lessons to promote student to the next level.

Charts are hung in the classrooms displaying color levels and numbers so students know their weekly schedule. This also shows School Board visitors where students are ranked when they enter each IRLA classroom. The school principal also has IRLA bulletin boards labeled with flowers along the bottom and color-coded butterflies along the top to display ranking of students as School Board visitors, fellow teachers, and students walk the halls will see where IRLA students are ranked.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included case selection and time. The study was conducted in one school, which was a part of one school district. Because of this, the sample size of teachers was small. As the study was conducted in a somewhat rural region of Louisiana, results may not necessarily generalize to urban areas. Another limitation was only females were participants in this study. There was one Black male teacher on campus. He was not certified in the PK-3 content area. Due to the small sample size, finding certified participants within this educational organization was challenging. The number of participants in the case means that study results cannot necessarily be compared to other similar populations, teachers, and situations.

As another limitation, all data was collected in a research context overshadowed by the global Covid-19 pandemic. However, the case itself is unique and can contribute to the body of knowledge regarding teacher efficacy, especially in small organizations in Louisiana during the pandemic. Another limitation could be participants' possible reluctance based on trust and personal predisposition. I am aware of bracketing and my own personal bias.

A final limitation is based on the work of Glesne and Peshkin (2016), which is the notion of backyard research. Backyard research occurs when a researcher studies her own organization, as I did. There is a potential imbalance of power between the researcher and participants in backyard research. According to Glesne and Peshkin (2016), findings from backyard research can be robust and powerful; however, the researcher must utilize multiple validation measures such as multiple data sources, member checking, and peer review of codes to confirm the accuracy of the information. Each of these strategies were employed.

Summary

Chapter 3 contained the elements of this proposed study. The elements of setting, participants, data sources, data analysis, researcher positioning, and limitations were addressed. In chapter 4, results are presented from findings.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter, the findings from in-depth data collection and analysis on teacher efficacy are presented. The purpose of this single case study was to explore how a select group of PK-3 certified teachers in a south Louisiana school perceive efficacy while examining these perceptions in the context of a global pandemic. A related secondary purpose was to discern how this select group of educators identified ways that teacher-efficacy can increase through specific practices. Creswell (1998) described a qualitative researcher as someone who “builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). The case study (Yin, 2018) design allowed for a close scrutiny of the particulars of the case.

Individual Case Reports

In an effort to assess how a select group of PK-3 teachers in a south Louisiana school perceived efficacy, data were collected and analyzed from five participants using one-on-one interviews, artifacts, and a researcher’s reflective journal. Specifically, I sought to determine what factors helped to promote self-efficacy and teacher efficacy perceptions, to better prepare teachers to be more efficient, and what changes could be made to ensure PK-3 elementary students are presented with positive learning environments to increase learning? This research was conducted in a pandemic environment, so how that impacts self-efficacy is important. As previously stated, the pandemic was COVID-19. According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) “COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, a coronavirus discovered in 2019. The virus spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Adults 65 years or older are at a higher risk”

(retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/dotw/covid-19/index.html>). During the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown of schools, educational environments changed the way students were traditionally taught. Instead of teaching in a school classroom, teachers were posting digital lesson plans for parents to continue teaching their children, while other teachers were teaching virtual from their living rooms. This was uncharted territory, it was unpredictable, and it was unsettling.

With this single case study, as the researcher, I focused on one-on-one personal interviews, artifacts, teacher's journal, efficacy scales, and investigated overall teacher perceptions. By analyzing several sources of evidence, I obtained information from five PK-3 certified teachers and collected their perceptions of teacher efficacy. Examining teacher interview data and data generated from responses to an efficacy scale potentially promoted a better understanding of participants individual teacher efficacy. This depicted how each certified teacher portrayed their own efficacy.

Finally, on a participant-by-participant basis, I compared participant self-efficacy scale responses and interview responses. Vaismoradi et al., (2016); Strauss and Corbin (1998) all described each stage of analysis and the importance of reading through interview transcriptions with stressing the fact to read and reread data, analyze and reexamine repeatedly, and review to the point of saturation. This was a circular process. I continued to conduct a cross case analysis and repeated this procedure for each individual case (Yin, 2018). In Table 4.1, themes, categories, codes, and code instances were presented.

Table 4.1 List of Themes, Categories, Codes, and Code Instances.

Theme	Category	Codes	Code Instances
Learning and Bonding	Child-Centered Dispositional Traits	Compassionate Understanding	50
Professional Development	Encouragement and Performance	Critical Higher Order Thinking	28
		Motivation	31
		Real Life Experiences	24
Structures of Efficacy	Creative	Grade Level Activities	35
	Classroom Management Techniques	Consistency	19
Need for Improvement	High Expectations	Goals	34
		Communication	60
Mandated Curriculum	Differentiated Instruction	Modeling	49
	Time	Engagement	38

Themes

Themes from individual interview responses and notes from the researcher’s journal were compared and aligned with teacher perceptions on efficacy. Five final themes were created:

Learning and Bonding, Professional Development, Structures of Efficacy, Need for Improvement, and Mandated Curriculum. By conducting this case analysis, I identified emerging themes and evaluated how themes related to research questions.

Learning and Bonding

Within this theme, I depicted a category Child-Centered Dispositional Traits with a code of Compassionate Understanding. Via their responses, participants indicated all teachers should possess certain dispositional traits. These individuals should be passionate, show compassion, be determined, patient, kind, loving, and considerate. According to Karakas (2013) “effective

teachers are caring, loving, funny, and patient, show special in and out of class interest in students, and are fair to everyone” (p. 1). Quotes culled from the interview data were revealing and illustrated the theme of *learning and bonding*.

For example, Emma’s perspective was that “teachers should be passionate, have compassion for students, be patient, and encourage all students through differentiated instruction”. Collaborations reinforce positive environments and can boost the morale of the school. Teachers who rate themselves as compassionate have higher accomplishment rates and more motivating styles (Moè & Katz, 2020).

In a similar way, Alex explained that “teachers must have a warm and loving spirit. They must be patient, understanding, and kind”. She believes in the importance of motivating her students so that they become life-long learners. She depicts the importance of being loving and supportive in order to establish a positive learning environment. Similarly, Billie believed “teachers need to be patient, loving, kind, compassionate, flexible, and understanding. Teachers should be adaptable, creative, determined, and forgiving”.

Charlie also agreed with Emma. Charlie stated “teachers should be kind hearted, strong willed, and have a passion for children”. Her typical day is becoming an actress. Mostly on days she doesn’t feel like being at school, she continues to push through with a smile. She believes some children “just need different”. She says ‘a teacher’s personality depicts the atmosphere in the classroom”. According to Virat (2022), a teacher’s compassion will guide the way some students experience school.

Overall, Participants incorporated and referred back to the different types of dispositional traits a teacher should possess in order to be efficient. Whether participants possess all of these traits or only some, they all depict a love for their students, illustrating the theme of *learning and*

bonding. As stated in Chapter 1, Friendman and Kass (2002) described teacher efficacy as “motivating, imparting knowledge, values, and morals to students” (p. 684).

Professional Development

Cohen (1993) described professional development as interactions of knowledge and skills that will enhance teaching practices and growth. Within the theme of *professional development*, there were three-categories with three codes; Encouragement: Critical Higher Order Thinking; Performance: Motivation; and Technology: Real Life Experiences. As referenced in chapter 2, Jacob et al., (2017) posited that previously acquired teaching skills and knowledge is built from grade level professional development. Elizabeth referred to professional development, comparing it to conducting research. She exclaimed:

I try to keep a journal throughout the year of what works and doesn't work for future reference. Then during the summer, I like to read articles pertaining to PreK. I like to see what works in other PreK classrooms that may be different from what I'm doing. We basically teach the same skills, just different programs. I like going to trainings and different professional development opportunities. But I really love webinars.

Helena stated she had attended several professional development courses before Covid that were PK-3 but as an overall multi-grade course. The in-person trainings did not focus separately on each grade level. Several years before Covid, she recalled that she had attended a teacher conference in Las Vegas which was by grade level. She continued to state that it was the best conference she had ever attended due to the fact it was specially by grade. She attended a workshop specially just for Kindergarten. She learned a lot of new information and was able to apply some to the strategies to her students. Helena shared that she hoped to attend this conference again in the new future. She expressed, “I think professional development conferences benefit teachers if the course pertains to individual grade levels”.

Alex had a different perspective about professional development. She was more focused on technology and increasing student engagement. She stated “professional development is beneficial to teachers if it helps promote technology and provides things we can take back to the classroom to help teach our students and help them prepare to be better.” Brin shared the same opinion and perception as Alex regarding professional development. Brin encouraged professional development and stated, “it provides resources I can bring back to my classroom and use to my advantage. And we need it, because it’s how we become better at what we do.”

Unlike the other participants, Charlie’s experiences and opinion on professional development focused more on behavior and student attitude. She shared her perceptions that by the time they get in third grade they are developing hormones and attitudes. She preferred professional development that dealt with classroom management, technology, ideas on raising student achievement, monitoring behavior, and fixing problems within the classroom before it escalated to the principal’s office.

Consequently, even though some participants experienced success with professional development workshops and webinars, there were some who would like to focus on direct grade level activities. As expressed in chapter two, professional development constantly deepens knowledge and skills to remain effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). For these participants, professional development addressed their need to continually learn and grow. Due to the pandemic, the select group of PK-3 certified teachers found it more difficult to teach content with no extra guidance that professional development would have offered.

Structures of Efficacy

Within the theme of *Structures of Efficacy*, I created two-categories with four codes; Creative: Grade Level Activities and Classroom Management Techniques: Consistency:

According to Al-Dababneh and Al-Zboon (2017) “creative teachers and creative teaching are key components in fostering creativity in young children” (p. 726). For instance, Emma incorporated creativity in her PreK classroom daily. She expressed:

I use a lot of props and hands-on activities. Before Covid, I had a student several years ago who did not like coming to school. He loved soccer and different balls. When I taught shapes and circles I brought a few balls from home. He was so excited. I made a point to ask him what he liked and eventually he got excited about learning. I made it a surprise and all the students came to school. We very seldom had a student who was absent. I know I have to make it exciting. That’s one of the main reasons I like Webinars. I can see what other teachers are doing in their classrooms to make it fun and exciting. At the same time keeping the students consistent is important with our daily routines and procedures.

Helena had the same perceptions as Emma. She also used props and hands on activities. She sets high expectations with her students by keeping them on daily routines. She celebrated small successes and held her students accountable for their learning process. Helena incorporated technology by teaching students to log onto specific learning sites, such as, Zearn (math website: www.zearn.org), Amplify (Reading and Science website: www.amplify.com), and on Fridays a fun website; www.starfall.com

Anna shared when students entered first grade they are more adaptable to forming peer relationships and setting individual goals. Anna and Helena exhibited aligned perceptions about setting high expectations with students. Anna tied in personal experiences, everyday life, focused targets, and classroom structure.

Brin incorporates strong classroom management with consistent procedures. She celebrates successes and encourages discussion among her students. She explained:

I allow my students to think. I give them the opportunity to figure out the best possible solution to the problem or discussion. My group activities are hands on, small group, and peer partners. This allows them to work together and be exposed to their peers. This helps build their strengths.

Charlie also agreed with Brin, as far as celebrating successes. She stated she used a multi-level teaching, encouraged parental involvement, guided students to adapt and set achievable goals.

She expressed:

I like my students to know exactly what I expect on the first day of school. We talk about rules and procedures. We set achievable goals and celebrate the smallest successes. I think this encourages my third graders to perform at a higher rate. I constantly tell them how proud I am of them and how I want them to be successful.

Participants shared similar perceptions, views and insights about their perceptions of creativity and *structures for efficacy*. As emphasized by Lunenburg (2011), self-efficacy influences the ability to perform successful tasks and motivate. Confident teachers have the ability to teach and motivate all students.

Need for Improvement

Within the theme of *need for improvement*, I created one category with two codes: High Expectations: Goals and Communication. As stated in the literature review in chapter two, Karimi (2011) advocated that observations are a model of professional development that involves feedback based on performance. Teachers should demonstrate strong organizational and communication skills. A positive teaching environment must be provided in order to incorporate scaffolding to improve academic skills and achievement. As an example, Emma believed sharing ideas and learning from each other as educators becomes very productive as individuals build a career in the teaching profession. She also conveyed that completing grade level observations promoted ideas and different ways to identify problems within the classroom. Emma believed professional development helped her improve her self-efficacy. As previously stated, she loved webinars and learning from other PreK teachers and perceived these mechanisms as both professional development but also, avenues for improvement.

Regarding the need for improvement, Helena believed performing observations in other schools pertaining to her grade level would improve her teaching style, and therefore, had the potential to raise her student achievement. She continued to discuss how “grade level observations help break down and understand curriculum. It also allows teachers to see how to teach the same content they are teaching and to develop extended ideas”.

Helena also stated:

I use a lot of whole brain teaching. It involves all students and improves listening skills. It also improves my efficacy by making me feel in control when my students are listening and following directions. Similarly, Anna incorporated whole brain teaching, modeling, promoting critical thinking skills, peer questioning, and setting high, reachable goals. She facilitated a positive, learning environment and constantly reviews procedures in order to keep her classroom an organized learning place for all students. She declared:

I think we need to provide new and novice teachers with mentors who have proven they are effective teachers. I think to improve my self-efficacy I need to accomplish small tasks and stay focused on what’s ahead of me. I also try to learn from the success of others. It’s important to shape goals in order to continue building self-efficacy.

Brin agreed with Anna by also utilizing whole brain teaching in order to foster collaborations in the classroom and build a positive, learning environment. By having a controlled classroom, she was able to increase her self-efficacy. She also responded that the practices of :

meaningful evaluations, constructive feedback, and suggestions that will provide meaningful professional development and resources will help increase self-efficacy. I mentioned professional development because that’s how we become better at what we do. I like my classroom organized and I set goals for myself. As teachers, we all need mentors to help inspire us within the education community and grow as teachers.

Charlie concurred with Emma, Helena, Alex, and Brin about conducting grade level observations in order to increase self-efficacy. She believed it was important practice to conduct observations within this school and incorporate grade level professional development in order to build stronger teams of teachers. Learning from others emerged as a viable way to increase efficacy. She continued to address the importance of the foundation of student learning and knowledge retainment. And, she explained how the environment and community play an important role on

classroom behavior. By observing other teachers within the same school and community, this practice allowed individuals to see sibling behavior in other classrooms and how specific behavior is handled. By acquiring knowledge needed to build individual confidence, this knowledge helped raise self-efficacy by acquiring the pedagogical skill to not only know how to reach students but the most effective ways in dealing with behavior as well. As expressed in the literature review in chapter two, Cohen and Hill's (2000) articulated in order to improve student outcomes and develop the practice of classroom procedures, teachers need quality and meaningful professional development and efficacy structures to internalize their sense of efficacy about their teaching craft and knowledge.

Mandated Curriculum

Mandated curriculums are a list of programs chosen by the state that offer grade level and subject content that align with state standards. Within the theme of *mandated curriculum*, two categories and two codes were created: Differentiated Instruction: Modeling and Time: Engagement. Differentiated instruction is very important in the learning process. The following describe the facets of this theme through participant examples.

Emma has to keep her PreK students engaged and excited through the day with the inflexibility of mandated curriculums. She stated "sometimes the little ones are very stubborn and if they don't want to do the work it's hard to get them to do it." As previously stated, she used props and models in order to keep students engaged. She presented mandated curriculum to students while they are in small groups, with open ended questions, and lets peers assist when needed. In order to boost morale, she allowed play time before instruction and after. In order to be successful, she has come to realize that content has to be fun and exciting in order to keep the interest of four-year olds. She also shared that she had collaborated with Kindergarten teachers to

make sure she is aligned and teaching all necessary skills her PreK students will need to be successful when entering Kindergarten.

Helena used cross curricular meetings to help guide and prepare her students for first grade. She incorporated technology by teaching students how to login and use laptops provided by the school. When incorporating differentiated instruction, she breaks down content, mapping within styles of learning, cross curricular questioning, and making connections to real life experiences. She made connections to celebrating successes and emphasizing effort. She stated, “it’s important to break tasks down into small, attainable steps so they can see they’re being successful and attaining their personal goals.” She also agreed with other participants that whole brain teaching helps to promote learning and keeps the students consistent.

As previously stated, Anna incorporates high expectations to ensure a positive learning environment. She emphasized clarification and structure when teaching her first-grade mandated curriculum. She used laptops provided by the school to enhance technology in order for students to reach their academic goals. She also used technology as an added component to increase student engagement. She was also quite adamant about allowing her students to have a choice in their learning process. Anna reiterated this:

I give my students a choice on how they will show their learning. They need to be able to show me their individual skills and interests. This allows students the think time they need to process content being taught individually and in groups. It allows students to ask questions when they don’t understand something or need further clarification.

While interview data was revealing, participants’ responses to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) long form *Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale* was also revealing. Next, I provided results from the administration of the scale.

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001)

As previously stated in chapter three, all participants completed a Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) long form *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* that had twenty-four questions with a score rate of one to nine. The questions on the efficacy scale were categorized into three sections by number and labeled with a description: (1) Student Engagement: # 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, 22; (2) Instructional Practices: # 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24; and (3) Classroom Management: # 3, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 19, 21. The Scores were converted into a teacher 10-point grade scale: A (100-90), B (89-80), and C (79-70). Each category totals 72 points, however combined amounts will accumulate to 216 points.

Data Analysis for Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale.

Once efficacy scale questions were divided into categories, I color coded and separated each category. In order to compile data from participants, I added up each category and divided by the total to obtain an average. As stated previously, the average was based on a ten-point grade scale that provided a letter grade for individual participants rating their self-efficacy. All data was calculated, analyzed repeatedly, and recorded in my reflective journal. All participants scored above an 80 percentile.

Table 5.1 Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale Average/Grade

Participants	Student Engagement	Instructional Practices	Classroom Management	Average	Grade
Emma (PreK)	.85	.83	.79	.82	B
Helena (K)	.85	.85	.92	.87	B
Alex (1)	.92	.90	.99	.94	A
Brin (2)	.94	.89	.97	.94	A
Charlie (3)	.93	.92	.81	.88	B

Researcher's Journal

As I worked on the first three chapters, I kept a researcher's journal. I used this journal to record my thoughts about the articles I was reading. Later I used it to write down questions I wanted to use in the interview process. Throughout the work day, as I thought about the certified teachers who had agreed to complete one-on-one interviews, I wrote down my thoughts about how I witnessed the candidates' relationships with the students. Whether candidates were walking in the hall or eating in the cafeteria. I made notes. I also wrote a summary about each candidate before and after the interview.

As I began coding, I recorded my thoughts, made my list of themes, and color coded as much as I thought possible. I used my researchers journal to record themes, categories, codes, and code instances. My peer assisted in coding and I recorded her coding as well when I added it to my current phase one of coding. Then I went back and completed phase two coding. I used my researchers journal to document more codes, move around codes, add new these, categories, and codes. I also used the researchers journal to write down and calculate the scores from the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Any thoughts or ideas were recorded in the researcher's journal.

Addressing Research Questions

The single case study provided a means to gather information from one-on-one interviews that resulted in themes, categories, codes, and code instances along with a teacher efficacy scale data. This single case study explored how a select group of PK-3 teachers in a south Louisiana school perceived efficacy. All research questions were addressed by the five themes: *Personality Traits, Professional Development, Perceptions, Improvement, and Mandated Curriculum*. In this chapter, the findings were connected to the research questions.

Research Question One: What are a select group of PK-3 teachers' perceptions for increasing efficacy?

The first research question addressed PK-3 teacher perceptions for increasing efficacy and their individual beliefs about their own self-efficacy. When assessing individual efficacy scales, all participants scored themselves on the high end of the scale rating. Hattie (2012) described self-efficacy as having “confidence, or a belief in yourself, that you can make things happen” (p. 81). All participants agreed on how collaboration: cross curricular and grade level meetings, sharing ideas, and open communication increased their perceptions of efficacy. According to Bernhardt (2013), perceptions improve understanding, what people believe, and personal experiences.

Cross curriculum meetings took place weekly in order to adhere to a form of communication and support. Participants discussed the importance of meetings, how it helped prepare teachers to work together, and know what was expected. Teachers congregated to express ideas and thoughts on real world situations. These meetings improved confidence in personal attitude, built morale, and allowed time to review content. Knowing grade level content supported time management and consistency. When students were engaged, there were less problems. Teachers who managed a positive, working classroom have increased efficacy and were more confident (Kim & Seo, 2018). Sharp et al. (2016) reported “teachers with high self-efficacy are willing to spend more time, effort, and perseverance for the success of their students” (p. 2432). Teachers who know their content are stronger in efficacy and are more motivated in the classroom.

There were many ideas and suggestions generated regarding how participants felt they could improve their efficacy. Observations were a key factor in the discussion. Participants

wanted meaningful evaluations and constructive feedback with suggestions that would help them improve their efficacy. Observations bring a different view, criticism, and perspective on how content is being taught. Awkard (2017) proclaimed “Schools can help teachers regain their sense of efficacy by helping them reflect on their classroom expectations and practices, making adjustments, and noting improvements in student learning” (p.54). Charlie suggested having someone record her while she taught several lessons. She declared:

If I could video myself, I could see what I’m doing wrong and fix it. I can become better. I would also like to have other teachers observe while I am teaching and give me feedback. Maybe a few positive things and a few negative things. Because how do we know if we are improving on the negative things?

Research Question Two: How can mandated curricula impact efficacy among select teachers?

The second research question focused on mandated curriculums that impact efficacy among select group of PK-3 teachers. Additionally, all five participants discussed their opinions about their grade level curriculum. They all voiced the importance of cross curriculum meetings. During these meetings, a variety of issues, positive and negative, were conversed. Emma referred to her meetings as a way to “bounce ideas off each other”. She also mentioned that areas where she would have had trouble teaching content, during these meetings she was able to ask for help and ideas. Alex shared these thoughts:

Meetings about curriculum are important because it allows teachers to come together and express their ideas and thoughts about what’s going on in our classrooms. We can present problems with an end result knowing we can discuss solutions. A few of the participants really focused on mandated curriculum following state standards and because of that, content being taught becomes a building component from grade to grade.

Helena claimed:

Mandated curriculum affects teacher efficacy because it is connected to accountability. Efficacy is impacted by the stress levels of presenting content to students in a way they can retain information in order to build knowledge from year to year. I think grade level meetings on mandated curriculum would improve efficacy and teacher job performance.

Helena was the only participant during the interview process to mention accountability. Other participants discussed putting forth the appropriate amount of effort to learn new and current mandated curriculum in order to make teachers more aware of content. This ensures a stronger sense of efficacy among teachers if they are better prepared for what they are teaching on a daily basis.

Participants shared the same thoughts about the reality of change that comes with mandated curriculums and effects it has on learning new content. Fullan (2001) and Joyce (1990) both described change as an educational, learning experience. Brin made the connection with mandated curriculum and efficacy to “having a voice”. As employees of school districts teachers do not get a say in chosen curriculums. However, during grade level meetings or cross curricular meetings, teachers can reflect and increase their efficacy by discussing how they implement curriculum. Brin also stated:

We can always find positive outcomes no matter how bad it seems. We don't have a choice in what we teach so we just have to encourage positive outcomes and collaborate as much as we can.

Darling-Hammond (2003), identified in her research that “teachers learn best by studying, doing, and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see” (p. 2).

Research Question Three: Among PK-3 teachers, what role does professional development play in influencing efficacy during the pandemic?

The third research question addressed professional development and its connection to influencing efficacy during the pandemic. As the pandemic emerged, schools were shut down and forced into online instruction. The teaching profession as we once knew it had been thrown into utter chaos. For decades, researchers have been writing about professional development and

its effects on teacher efficacy. Like everything else in the education realm, professional development was also shut down, so scheduled workshops had been canceled, the ability to observe and be observed was gone, and grade level collaborations didn't occur.

Eventually, society began to evolve away from the pandemic, and teachers slowly started to get back a sense of normalcy. Professional development workshops resumed as webinars. Participants were all in agreement that grade level professional development helped promote and influence efficacy. Emma loves research and praised webinars. She attended as many as she could through the school year in order to learn more information on her content that would help guide her PreK classroom. She stated, "I love webinars. I want to be at all of them. I learned to be more tech savvy, whereas before I didn't know as much about Microsoft Teams or other programs."

Helena somewhat agreed with Emma and highlighted the importance of professional development. She revealed, "I like webinars but I would rather attend a workshop in person. I'm a visual learner and it helps me to see it, then do it." According to Ross and Bruce (2007), professional development enhances teacher beliefs about student learning. Participants all stated that it is hard getting a new curriculum and not having any professional training on it. As participants thought about the time of Covid-19 and the stay at home orders, they reflected that the job seemed to be more difficult.

Participants were all in agreement when they shared personal experiences while teaching online classes. Students were not logging into school computers they were given. Parents were not assisting or helping students follow teaching schedules. Parents were logging in late after the classes had already started and expected the teachers to reteach all information that had been taught as the start of class. Most parents could not or would not assist students with homework

and repost it online. Due to this, student academics dropped below average. All of these actions had a toll on teacher perceptions of efficacy. Helena justified her opinion and stated she hoped she never went on lockdown again. She conferred:

There was always a worry if I was teaching content so students could understand it. There was worry about students who didn't show up for class. As a teacher, how can I catch them up? Do I know enough about the content to explain it and how do I know they are really listening and paying attention? During this time, professional development would have been a great asset to have in order to help guide us as teachers on how to deal with the additional stress of teaching online. Teaching Kindergarten in person is a 360 compared to teaching it online.

Alex revealed that she faced the same problems as other participants. She worried about catching her students up since most of them never attended class and those who did were logging in late. She had to keep assuring herself that she could do it and she felt a sense of burn out because she was constantly calling parents stressing that students needed to attend class and do the work. This was a time when teachers really needed professional development to help guide them on actions and protocol. Alex stated, "our district had nothing in place. One day we were having a normal school day and by that afternoon, the state was shutting everything down."

Teacher efficacy was challenged with many teachers from all backgrounds. The pressure was extreme on how they were going to be knowledgeable enough to catch up all the students who had fallen behind due to the pandemic.

Brin expressed good and bad effects about the pandemic and how it affected her as a teacher. The good aspects were she was forced to learn technology. The bad thing was parents thought the March 2021 shuttering of schools was a type of early vacation. Most of second grade didn't login to class, however there were a few who were on time and did the work. For the most part, most of the second-grade students fell behind and this added extra stress on her and impacted her sense of efficacy because she didn't know how to help them since they could not

attend in person classes. She strongly stated, “the pandemic had a profound impact on teachers and students.”

As third-grade teachers, Charlie and Emma had the same thought concept. Charlie also revealed that during the pandemic she became more tech savvy. She felt like her efficacy increased with the use of learning new technology during the pandemic. Even though her students were suffering academically, she tried to learn more things about the programs she was teaching online and made things available through Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams. In her opinion, her efficacy increased because she forced herself to become more knowledgeable about online teaching and she was confident when presenting content. She did experience burn out due to the fact she was constantly calling parents and checking on students, a teacher expectation that increased greatly during the pandemic shut down.

Summary

In Chapter four, the findings were reported from this single case study. The study was informed by one-on-one interviews, teachers’ efficacy scale responses, and a researcher’s reflective journal. The collected data were analyzed. Then themes and codes were created. The current findings from this single case study provided new information on teacher efficacy and how teachers’ perceptions, mandated curriculum, and professional development play a significant role on self- efficacy. Findings from this study also generated ideas that will likely lead into future studies. Chapter five will continue the discussion of these findings and provide implications.

CHAPTER 5. IMPLICATIONS, SIGNIFICANCE, FUTURE RESEARCH

The primary purpose of this study was to explore how a select group of PK-3 teachers in a south Louisiana school perceived efficacy while examining these perceptions in the context of a global pandemic. A related secondary purpose was to discern how this select group of educators identify ways that teacher-efficacy could increase through specific practices.

Introduction

This chapter addresses implications and provides recommendations for future research. The findings from the data collection and analysis addressed all the research questions. The research questions presented a framework for designated themes.

Discussion of Findings

By undergirding the frameworks of this study, self-efficacy theory, social learning theory, and social cognitive theory, all substantiate the data collected (Ashford & LeCroy, 2010; Bandura, 2005; Levin et al., 2001; Tsui, 2018). All participants demonstrated self-efficacy theory through reflections of performance and motivation (Bandura, 2005). Participants all used different options to depict their own connection to self-efficacy theory.

For example, Emma promotes motivation for her students by using props. As a teacher, she puts herself through a thought process where she takes notes and completes research in order to be better at her job. As stated in chapter 4, she loves webinars and learning new ideas that she can use in her classroom. Helena preferred to build her performance by learning content in order to break it down further. Alex mentioned she was encouraged and motivated by setting higher achieving goals for herself and her students. Brin used open communication as a motivator for her self-efficacy. She liked sharing ideas about routines and more ways to become effective as a second-grade teacher. Charlie used new and prior knowledge to increase her efficacy by applying

her personal skills to be better at her job.

Social learning theory was notated with all participants with the discussion of improving teacher skills through observations, modeling, and imitation (Bandura, 2005). The data delineated all participants believed observations and feedback would help promote their efficacy. This was something that was currently lacking within the school. One formal observation was being held before Christmas and there were no discussions or feedback. All participants stated they would like to hear feedback, whether bad or good. This was the only way to improve their efficacy, skills, and performance. Charlie expressed the idea of possibly recording herself while she taught a lesson so she could see how to change to be better. She also wanted the opportunity to observe other teachers within her ELA, Science, and Social-Studies grade level content. She concurred with Bandura (2005) that there is importance in learning from each other.

Lastly, all five participants demonstrated social cognitive theory. Throughout the interview process, participants were highly motivated and displayed a positive attitude about the teaching profession (Akkaya & Akyol, 2016). All participants shared many of the same ideas, as far as adapting to the new curriculum, better performance than the previous year, and were highly motivated about learning grade level content to be better prepared for their job. The participants shared many of the same qualities and characteristics. They all stated how much they loved their profession. All participants agreed and felt teachers should provide a positive impact to encourage and inspire students within their classrooms.

Implications for Practice

For the current study, the following implication measures were acquired from face-to-face interviews with five PK-3 certified teachers. Participants discussed the importance of routines and procedures, not just in the classroom, but throughout the school. Teachers wanted to

have a clear understanding of what was expected from the principal and fellow teachers. Helena expressed, “if everyone follows the rules and procedures, then expectations are set higher.” This also ameliorates the function of the school. At this particular south Louisiana school, the teachers suggested that the principal should consider assigning mentors to new teachers. Further, it was suggested that the principal allow teachers to complete observations among their peers who teach the same content. This would foster collaboration through the exchange and sharing of ideas and as a mechanism to promote and encourage support among co-workers.

Teachers recommended that new teachers should be assigned mandatory grade level observations on their content to understand how to implement curriculum. These teachers should also be provided with professional development that focuses mainly on classroom management, procedures, and understanding of curriculum. This would provide opportunities for new teachers to be more prepared for the upcoming school year. The study further revealed the importance of professional development as all five of the participants agreed that professional development had a significant impact on teacher efficacy, confidence, and efficiency with mandated curriculum.

Another suggestion that emerged from data analysis was for principals to have a better evaluation system and supervision protocols. Principals should be consistent throughout the school when administering data and collecting it. Data should be collected through teacher surveys, assessments, parental surveys, observations, open discussions, and interviews. All teachers on campus should provide innovative, instructional practices, attend various grade level professional development to ensure to develop better teaching qualities to reach all students. All faculty should ensure and enforce a safe and secure learning environment for all students. In order for school leaders to improve teacher efficacy they should provide a positive impact to

encourage enthusiasm and inspiration within their schools. Principals should encourage the importance for teachers to acknowledge their students, individualized needs, and increasing progress into classroom planning (Szczesniul & Huizenga, 2014).

Overall implications centered on ways teachers could realize self-efficacy. Implications focused on establishing routines and procedures, principals should assign mentors to new teachers as regular practice, teachers should complete observations among their peers who teach similar content, and novice teachers should be assigned mandatory grade level observations. In addition, the need for differentiated professional development also emerged as a major implication. Finally, principals needed to create better, more consistent evaluation systems and supervision protocols.

Recommendations for Future Research

The sharing of knowledge from the participants in this study, data analysis, efficacy scale, and reflective journal suggest recommendations for future research. This study resulted in findings regarding how teachers perceive their own individual teacher efficacy. My attentiveness on this topic is due to my twenty years-experience as an elementary teacher. Through this study, I was able to behold the perceptions of other grade level teachers and see further research opportunities that could be explored on teacher efficacy. There are many ideas and solutions on how teachers can be more efficient at their daily jobs.

Even though this particular study was limited to a small south Louisiana school, it would be beneficial to conduct this study in other schools across the state in different school districts and parishes. Whether the education organization is a charter, urban, suburban, private, or parochial school, teacher efficacy is important for all individuals who are educating children. Education across all learning environments depend on individual knowledge to help promote

learning and growth among all students. Multiple studies within the state of Louisiana could help promote teacher efficacy and possibly prove ways to improve teacher performance.

Even though this research study was with PK-3 certified teachers, it would be beneficial to conduct a study in other grade levels. There may be other advantages to conducting a study across the five regions in the U.S. or just the Southern Region to compare teacher thoughts and the relationship to teacher efficacy. Due to each state demanding different score results and growth goals, researching teacher efficacy could provide evident knowledge on what teachers need to promote self-efficacy. Research studies could also provide more knowledge on how other states incorporate professional development and support for their teachers. Through the use of surveys, efficacy scales, observations, and interviews, researchers could compare and contrast data collected to further determine how other states raise teacher efficacy. There are economic disparities across different school districts within different states that may add more beneficial data if studies were conducted in wealthier locations. This research study could be conducted in other countries and between different ethnic groups.

A limitation while conducting this study was the deficiency of male teachers. It may be advantageous for future studies of this type to include a more diverse sample and greater male representation. All certified participants were female. Therefore, future studies could explore the male perceptions of teacher efficacy and the role males have on student achievement. This research could dig deeper by incorporating different male cultures in teaching roles and how they are increasing individual efficacy.

Lastly, in an effort to understand efficacy, researchers can use multiple case studies to compare different schools within a district in order to further establish teacher efficacy beliefs.

There are many options in performing different kinds of studies in order to share individual frames of reference and comprehension of the presented topic. The many options in conducting research on better preparing teachers can help bridge educational gaps and raise student achievement.

In conclusion, more training on technology and professional development could be offered at the beginning of every school year to better prepare teachers in the midst of another pandemic, such as, Covid-19. When the pandemic hit schools full force and caused the county to shut down, teachers were not prepared to educate students via the internet, known as virtual. This topic was discussed in this study and depicted among participants regarding the stress it caused on their sense of efficacy. Future research could investigate how school leaders and administrators would improve strategies and training for teachers in case the rise of another pandemic occurs within our education system.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the purpose of this study was to explore how a select group of PK-3 teachers in a south Louisiana public school perceived efficacy while examining these perceptions in the context of a global pandemic. A related secondary purpose was to discern how this select group of educators identified ways that teacher-efficacy could increase through specific practices. The research adds to the fields of teacher education and educational leadership on teacher self-efficacy. This study provided PK-3 certified teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy and the participant relationships between their perceptions, learning environment, personal improvements, personality traits, and changes curriculum. Through participants' knowledge and experiences, it was disclosed that teachers could build self-efficacy through meaningful professional development, cross-curricular meetings, grade-level meetings, setting high, but

reachable goals, collaborating, using open communication, and receiving constructive feedback from observations.

Lastly, teacher efficacy was linked to *learning and bonding, professional development, structures in efficacy, the need for improvement, and mandated curricula*. All five PK-3 certified teachers who participated in this study, completed the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) based on each individual perception of themselves. The efficacy scale reported these select PK-3 teachers depicted personal efficacy at approximately 80%. Thus, these PK-3 teacher participants believed they are continuing to build success and make a difference with each child who enters the classroom.

APPENDIX A. TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Case Study of the Impact of Teacher Efficacy on Select PK-3 School Faculty in a South Louisiana School: A Perceptual Investigation

Certified PK-3 Teachers

Date:

Time:

Prior Discussion:

- Discuss the following before interview begins:
 - My MacBook Air will record our conversation.
 - No one will listen to this recording other than me and it will be to edit transcripts
 - Discuss pseudonyms

Educational Background

- Share your educational and teaching background.

Student Engagement

- How do you promote critical thinking with your students?
- How do you motivate students who show a low interest in school?
- What are examples of things you do in order to get students to believe they can be successful?
- What are possible steps you take as an educator to help your students value learning?
- How are you providing differentiated instruction to promote individual learning?

School Improvement

- What personality traits do teachers need to be successful?
- How are cross-curricular meetings important?
- How do cross-grade level meetings help improve school settings?
- How do cross-grade level meetings help improve teacher efficacy?

Self-Perseverance

- What are some suggestions you can give to improve teacher efficacy?
- How can you improve your self-efficacy?

Covid-19

- What impact has teaching in the pandemic had teacher efficacy?

Change is a Good Thing

- What is something you would change within your organization? Why?

Is there anything you would like to add to the interview while we are still recording?

APPENDIX B. TEACHERS' SENSE OF EFFICACY SCALE

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (long form)

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001).

1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

21. How well can you respond to defiant students?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

APPENDIX C. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



TO: Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell
LSUAM | Col of HSE | Education |
CC00165

FROM: Alex Cohen
Chairman, Institutional Review Board

DATE: 22-Apr-2022

RE: IRBAM-22-0160

TITLE: Case Study of the Impact of Teacher
Efficacy on Select PK-3 School Faculty in
a South Louisiana School: A Perceptual
Investigation

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial Application

Review Type: Expedited Review

Risk Factor: Minimal

Review Date: 22-Apr-2022

Status: Approved

Approval Date: 22-Apr-2022

Approval Expiration Date: 21-Apr-2023

Expedited Categories: 07

Requesting Waiver of Informed Consent: No

Re-review frequency: Annually

Number of subjects approved: 6

LSU Proposal Number:

By:

Alex Cohen, Chairman

Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.**

** All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/research>*

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VITA

Tara Alfred-Pellerin was born in Texas and raised in south Louisiana. Prior to attending Louisiana State University as a doctoral student in Education Leadership, she earned her Education Specialist from Louisiana State University and a Master's Degree from Nicholls State University. She taught elementary grades 1-6 for twenty-one years and served as Interim Director. In her current position, she is teaching first grade in a south Louisiana elementary school where she also serves as Red Ribbon Chairman. Her current research agenda mainly focuses on increasing efficacy within a school district, teacher efficacy, and ways principals can increase efficacy to raise student achievement.