

# Implications of Gender on Teachers' Teaching Efficacy

Lysinge Née Magdalene Limunga Njoh

B.A. (Hons) in English, Dipen II. M.Ed (Hons) EPY, PhD in View  
Faculty of Education, University of Buea, Cameroon, Central Africa

## ABSTRACT

Self-efficacy beliefs, which are the confidence student teachers have in their professional competence are closely related to academic and professional training outcomes. The purpose of this study was to examine the implications of gender on teachers' teaching efficacy.

One research question and hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. It was a survey research. A sample of 323 student teachers selected purposively from five Government Teacher Training Colleges in the South West Province completed an adapted version of teacher-efficacy scale developed by Woolfolk-Hoy (1990). The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Software version 12.0 for windows.

The finding showed that there was no significant difference between the teaching efficacy of female and male student teachers. The results were discussed and some recommendations have been made.

## INTRODUCTION

From the inception of teacher training programmes in the 1920s, the demand for trained teachers has steadily increased, following the increase in the number of nursery and primary schools in Cameroon and beyond. This increase in the demand in the quantity of teachers can not in any way ignore the demand in quality of teaching that will bring about intended learning out come. Teachers' self-efficacy is primordial in every aspect of effective curriculum implementation

Bandura (1977, 1986) defines "self-efficacy" as "people's judgements of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. It is not concerned with the strategies one has but with judgments of what one can do with whatever strategies one possesses". Self-efficacy has to do with specific domains. Students who feel self-efficacious are able to picture themselves succeeding in challenging situations, which in turn determines their level of effort toward the task (Paris and Byrnes, 1989, Solomon, 1983; 1984). According to Bandura (1977, 1986) the judgments students have about their competence highly influences whether they believe that they have the coping strategies to successfully handle challenging situations. Solomon (1983, 1984) explains that "students' self-efficacy may also determine whether they choose to engage themselves in a given activity and may determine the amount of effort learners will invest in a given academic task, provided the source and requisite task is perceived as challenging".

Silverman and Casazza (2000) state that the effects of high and low competence beliefs are significant in that "High self efficacy (competence) beliefs result in enhanced effort during difficult tasks, reduced stress in taxing situations and the choice of goals that are challenging and that sustain interest and involvement. Low self-efficacy beliefs result in reduced effort, tendencies to give up when faced with difficult tasks,

Increased attention to personal deficiencies, the development of avoidance behaviour, increased anxiety and stress, and the likelihood of lowered aspiration leading to

the reverse of self efficacy which is learned- helplessness". It is also important to note that mastery experiences reinforce beliefs of competence (self-efficacy). Successes tend to raise a person's level of self-judgment, whereas failures tend to lower it. Individuals with a series of successful experiences are usually able to tolerate an occasional failure with little or no overall effect on their positive personal efficacy beliefs. Easy successes however do not facilitate positive self-efficacy beliefs and should not be encouraged as a way to change self judgement (Casazza, 2000).

Even though several researchers have investigated the relationship of self-efficacy to learning and academic achievement, more is still being done particularly with more attention to academic performance. (Lent, Brown and Larkin 1986); (Multon, Brown and Lent, 1991; Schunk, 1994). In this review, two major factors examined are; personal and teaching efficacy. Personal efficacy has to do with how much effort will be applied to attain an outcome, the level of persistence applied to the task in the face of difficulties or setbacks and style of attribution (Bandura 1977, 1982, 1997). Ryan and Cooper state that the teachers' personality is the most critical factor in successful teaching. If teachers have warmth, empathy, sensitivity, enthusiasm and humour, they are more likely to be successful than if they lack these characteristics. They further warn that four major types of teacher attitudes affect teaching behaviour. They include attitude towards self, attitude towards children, attitude towards peers and parents and attitude towards the subject matter. Teaching efficacy represents the confidence to teach, use instructional innovation and manage classrooms (Woolfolk Hoy, 2000).

Meanwhile professional competence deals with the expert knowledge that one has in carrying out a task. Every society has certain functions to be performed if life within that society has to be sustained and the quality maintained or improved upon. There are societies that create work specialization and invent institutions and organizations that facilitate delivery and improvement of services. These are done because of the need for professional competence.

Howsam, Corrigan and Denmark (1985) note that “professionals have a strong service motivation and lifetime commitment to competence”. Professionals are people who have been educated in most valid knowledge and skills in a particular field. The professionals have expert knowledge. Lortie (1984) states that professional competence has to do with knowledge, skills, behaviours, attitudes and values that constitute the bases for professional expertise and decision-making. Trained teachers must draw from what they have as professional knowledge and intervention strategies in order to decide how to help children.

The Government Teacher-Training Colleges (G.T.T.C) specifically trains teachers for the nursery and primary level of education so that the student teachers should have expert knowledge. Tambo and Ndongko (2000) highlight the *raison d'être* of professional training when they state;

*“(i) Human relationships and their impact on school and classroom activities, (ii) factors influencing individual differences in pupils and the ways of taking account of these differences, (iii) problems of classroom communication, especially language, the art of questioning, skills in explaining, describing, narrating, (iv) that learning environment, motivation and discipline, (v) class, group and individual work, (vi) understanding lesson patterns; implications for lesson planning, (vii) techniques of presentation, (ix) methods of assessments, test construction, and curriculum planning, (x) planning schemes of work, integrated approach to teaching, topic work, use of resources and visual aids; (xi) strategies for coping with large class size”, are phenomenon in the school system which should be examined with care.*

### Statement of the Problem

One of the major problems faced by some of the student teachers is that they are not sure of themselves with respect to teaching. They do not manifest self-confidence during teaching practice sessions and are equally very tense especially when a teacher is around. They are concerned about communication skills during teaching and discussions. It is also common for such students to attribute their failure to factors like pupils, F pupils’ family background, and lack of stationeries and so on. They are also not certain as to whether they can really help break-up pupils from negative or difficult influences. Most of these student teachers show boredom, and are pessimistic about future teaching. “Low-efficacy teachers blame failure on students’ family background and motivation, deprecate low achievers, and stratify their classrooms according to ability since such student-teachers may not want to be accountable for pupils’ failures or negative outcome. They may not also want changes for the better” (Weber and Omotani, 1995).

Another problem is that sometimes even average ability student teachers fail to study specific subject areas; consequently they have difficulties in teaching the subject matter in the classroom. In other words student teachers who have not mastered the subject matter and all other professional skills tend to have less self-confidence during teaching practice. Although both male and female students face this problem, it seems to be more prevalent among female student teachers.

The major objective of the study was to find out whether student teachers’ teaching efficacy depends on their gender.

### Research Hypothesis

Ha: The teaching efficacy of female student teachers significantly differs from those of male student teachers.

Ho; the teaching efficacy of female student teachers does not significantly differ from that of male student teachers.

### Significance of the study

1. The researcher hopes that the study will be of great help to student teachers because it will enable them to know how important self-confidence is to effective teaching.
2. It will also help them realise the need to develop a positive attitude towards teaching practice and the their programme as a whole.
3. It will also help them to know that it is not impossible to carry out any professional or academic task provided they develop the necessary interest towards the task.
4. It will also encourage the teacher trainers and cooperating teachers to develop an understanding attitude toward the student teachers.
5. Finally it will encourage the trainers and cooperating teachers to give the desired enactive experience that will help to increase student teachers’ self -efficacy.

### Delimitation of the Study

This study deals with self-efficacy of student teachers but was limited to the student teachers at all levels in the Government Teacher Training Colleges (G.T.T.C) in the South West Province. It did not include student teachers in Faculties of Education in Universities or Advanced Teachers’ Training Institutions like the Higher Teacher

### BACKGROUND

There are some factors that lead to the development of self-efficacy, but it is worth knowing that the initial sources of self-efficacy are centered in the family. Bandura, (1997), Meece(1997) postulate that parents who provide stimulating environment for their children help to stimulate children’s curiosity. Such environments encourage creativity in children and also provide mastery experiences that help to build children’s self- efficacy. They continue to say that environments that are rich in interesting activities offer challenges to the children and motivate them to work hard. Children who display more curiosity and do exploratory activities promote parental responsiveness. The judgment that people make about their capabilities whether accurate or not are often based on the following sources, which include: enactive experience, vicarious experience and verbal persuasion.

Enactive experience is a highly influential source of self-efficacy. Successful experiences raise self-efficacy with regard to target performance. For instance the greater feelings of self-competence produce increased effort and persistence on a task ultimately lead to a higher level of performance (Vasta, Haith, and Miller 1992). On the other hand, any experience of failure or repeated failure creates low efficacy beliefs, which usually result to reduced effort at a task and tendencies to give up in the [face of difficult tasks. Increased attention to personal deficiencies and the development of avoidance behaviour lead to the likelihood of lowered aspirations or learned-helplessness (Bandura, 1986).

The second source of efficacy information is vicarious experience, which is through observation. Observing peers, or peer models especially those with perceived similar capabilities develops ones self-efficacy. Observing peers succeed can raise an observer’s self-efficacy and motivate him/her to perform the task if he/she believes he/she will

be successful (Schunk, 1987). Conversely, observing others fail can lead I students to conclude that they lack the competence to succeed; this can dissuade them from attempting the task. Models are most influential for students who are uncertain about their capabilities, or who are not familiar with the task, or those who have experienced difficulties and hold doubts (Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 1987). Modelling is also backed by Bandura's social learning theory in which he insists that people learn by imitating the behaviour of other models. This is very applicable to student teachers because, when they observe, their teachers, cooperating teachers and mates teach, they tend to observe and imitate. This improves their teaching efficacy especially if they are given reinforcement. According to Bandura during such interaction, an individual may learn to modify his or her behaviour as a result of how others in the group are responding.

According to Bouffard — Bouchard, (1989) as cited in Sundberg (1997) convincing people serve as another source of efficacy information. Teachers, for example, can raise or inhibit students' perception of their efficacy by suggesting whether or not they have the capabilities to succeed in a given task. Models can also be used to demonstrate to self-doubters that personal capabilities are more often a result of effort rather than innate capability. Physiological indicators are also sources of self-efficacy information. People often have physical reactions to anticipated events.

Many develop sweaty palms, nervous vocal reaction when talking and fast I rate of heart beat because of fear or anxiety. This is typical of people with low self-efficacy (Baumrind 1973)

The Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research (1995, vol. 39, 311-318) revealed a study that investigated gender differences regarding perceived self -efficacy and academic performance of students in business administration across a broad range of subjects. A sample of 154 undergraduate students (77 women and 77 men) in a Norwegian college were asked to rate their confidence in performing each of the tasks on a five-point scale ranging from "no confidence at all to complete confidence". On the basis of a factor analysis (principal Component Analysis, varimax rotation) six factors were identified representing six subjects. The finding revealed that there was no significant gender differences in academic performance

VonDras (2005) presented a paper at an annual meeting of the American Psychological Society on the influence of individualism —collectivism on learning barriers and self-efficacy of course performance. The purpose was to examine the association of individual-collection with learning barriers and students<sup>4</sup> self-efficacy grading academic performance in a large, introductory life -span development course. The subjects involved in the study included 103 students enrolled in the course (84 women and 19 men) and age ranging from 18-55years. They were administered a survey at the end of the fourth week of the semester. Individualism-collectivism was assessed using the subjective individualism and collective scale (Triands, 1995, instrument I P 206- 207). Individualism here refers to an emphasis on independence and personal aspects, versus a collectivism orientation where there is greater interdependence and group aspects. The scores were summed to create a continuous measure of individualism-collectivism with a range of 4 to 12. Learning barriers were assessed using an

expanded perception of Barrier scale (POB: Luzzo and Me Whither, 2001). The items asked if financial issues, social relationships, social stereotypes, scholastic preparation, personal characteristics and aspects of the educational environment were barriers to learning. A rating scale that ranged from strongly agrees(1) to strongly disagree (5) was used. Self-efficacy ratings included measures assessing self-description as a student, expected grade, as well as the importance, difficulty, perceived control, ability to overcome learning barriers and the likelihood of success in attaining one's educational goal in the course.

The findings showed that preliminary analyses indicated students' average expected grade for the course was a " high B ", and no correlation between ethnicity and the individualism - collectivism index was observed. The other analyses however indicated associations involving participants' age, gender, year in college, expected grade and self-efficacy ratings. With these demographic characteristics, the result showed that with the exception of negative family attitude, student higher in collectivism were more likely to report greater endorsement of learning barriers referencing learning style. The individualism -Collectivism was found to be significantly associated with self-ratings of type of student.

Katz (2005) carried out a study on the effect of self-efficacy reflection on efficacy appraisal. The purpose of this study was not only to try and raise efficacy appraisal but also to reduce over-estimated efficacy beliefs, which were found to be a more frequent problem with most students. Another purpose was to determine the most effective training for each efficacy type. Furthermore it was to gain additional insight into the self-efficacy process in an authentic environment utilizing qualitative methods.

The participants included 625 sixth grade elementary school students selected from 22 classes in eight schools. The sample was divided into four groups: reflection training, skill training, both reflection and skill training and control group. The instrument was a Likert-type questionnaire Results showed that the combination of reflection and skill training was found to have the most significant effect on performance, and on efficacy appraisal accuracy for the majority of students. Reflection training was found to have a significant effect on efficacy appraisals of the unrealistically negative type.

Lee (2005) presented a study on the brief history of the online environment and discussed the development and validation of an instrument that measured online student's self-efficacy beliefs with course content and communication technology such as email, Internet and computer conferencing. The purpose of the study wasto develop and validate a new instrument that measured students' confidence levels with online technologies particularly web CT. A total of 30 items, 5-point Likert scaled items were developed.

The participants consisted of 31 students attending the University of Central Florida at Orlando enrolled in an undergraduate course Technologies for Educators (EME 2040). The study used factor analyses with orthogonal rotation to examine the interrelationships among the items of the course content self-efficacy scale and online technologies of self- efficacy scale. Each item was preceded by the phrase 'I feel confident' and the participants were

asked to indicate their attitude from strongly disagree "disagree", "neutral", "agree", to "strongly agree". Findings showed that there was a significant relationship between course content self-efficacy and online technologies.

## METHODOLOGY

The survey research design was used for this study. This was because the researcher wanted to get the views about the beliefs and behaviours of student teachers from the different Government Teacher Training Colleges.

The population for this study was made up of student teachers from government teacher training colleges in the South West Province. There are Seven Teacher Training Colleges, but only five were randomly selected for this study.

The five colleges include:

1. Government Teacher Training College (G.T.T.C.) Buea
2. Government Teacher Training College (G.T.T.C.) Kumba
3. Government Teacher Training College (G.T.T.C.) Limbe
4. Government Teacher Training College (G.T.T.C.) Fontem
5. Government Teacher Training College (G.T.T.C.) Mamfe

A sample of 323 student teachers from five G.T.T.Cs was used for this study. Student teachers from all the classes participated in the study. The selection was done at two levels. Firstly\* five G.T.T.Cs were randomly selected. Seven student teachers who represented the seven G.T.T.Cs had to pick folded papers on which 'Yes' or 'No' was written. Those who picked the papers with 'yes' written on them were taken for the schools selected and those with 'no' were left out. The Second level of selection was concerned with participants for the study. This was done through cluster sampling technique. This was employed because the enrolment of the G.T.T.Cs is not high. Instead of randomly selecting a sample of student teachers, the researcher thought it wise to use all the student teachers enrolled in the selected schools. Therefore, the student teachers in each school constituted a cluster. This exercise was carried at the end of the academic year 2005/2006.

**Table: Presents the sample.**

School	Level	Sample	Gender	
			Boys	Girls
G.T.T.C Buea	1 <sup>st</sup> year	8	1	7
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	27	6	21
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	50	7	43
Sub-Total		85	14	71
G.T.T.C Limbe	1 <sup>st</sup> year	9	0	9
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	12	1	11
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	27	3	24
Sub-Total		48	4	44
G.T.T.C Kumba	1 <sup>st</sup> year	42	5	37
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	38	7	31
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	24	13	11
Sub-Total		104	25	79
G.T.T.C Fontem	1 <sup>st</sup> year	6	1	5
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	4	0	4
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	8	0	8
Sub-Total		18	1	17
G.T.T.C Mamfe	1 <sup>st</sup> year	23	7	16
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	20	5	15
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	25	8	17
Sub-Total		68	20	48
Grand Total		323	63	260

Table shows that the sample consisted of 260 female and 63 male student teachers from the five colleges. There were 88 first years, 101 second years and 134 third years.

Data were collected using a questionnaire that was developed by the researcher

The validation of the instrument was done in two phases. Phase one involved pilot testing with 20 student teachers of G.T.T.C Limbe. Their responses showed that the items were understood. Her supervisor through thorough checking and verification of items did the second phase of the validation. The researcher was then given the go ahead to distribute the copies to the various colleges.

The copies of the questionnaire (323) were administered to the various respondents in the five-selected G.T.T.Cs. The researcher made contacts with the various principals through phone calls and letter writing. The attestation showing that the researcher is indeed a postgraduate student in the University of Buea was attached to each of the letters sent out to the colleges. It was only after receiving the principal's approval that the researcher or her assistant visited the colleges.

The researcher personally handed some questionnaire to the Government Teacher Training Colleges of Buea, Limbe and Kumba, respectively. Meanwhile the rest were sent through travelling agencies to the various schools in areas that were far away. The completed copies of the questionnaire (292) were returned within one week.

In scoring the teacher efficacy scale, Gibson and Dembo: long form was used. Construct validity of the 22-item efficacy scale was based on Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) prospective teaching efficacy (T E) and personal efficacy (P E). These were two independent factors. Some of the items were reversed because they did not indicate a strong sense of efficacy. Giving the 1= "strongly agree" response to the statement, when I try really, I can get through to most difficult pupils" must be reversed so that the respondent receives a score of 6 rather than 1. To determine the T E and P E scores, the researcher computed unweighed means of the items that loaded .35 or higher on each respective factor.

Data collected with the use of questionnaire were coded and entered into a spreadsheet. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 12.0 for windows was used in analysing the data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and variance.

Inferential statistics were used. The Pearson correlation coefficient test statistics and Z — test (student t- test equivalent for large sample). These tests were carried out at 0.05 level of significance. Below is the formula for the Z-test The formula for Z-test is:

Z =

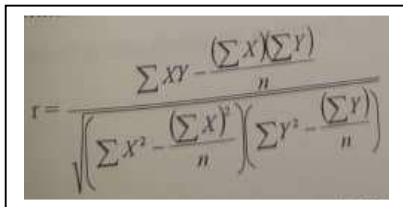
$$Z = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{S_1^2}{N_1} + \frac{S_2^2}{N_2}}}$$

$X_1$  = mean for group 1

$X_2$  = mean for group 2  $S^2$  = Variance for group 1

$S_2^2$  = Variance for group 2

The formula for Pearson correlation coefficient is



**FINDINGS**

The means of items relating to personal efficacy were grouped into two groups (male and female) as shown on table below

Items	Means	
	Female	Male
The hours in my class have little influence on pupils compared to the influence of their home environment.	2.43	2.49
The amount a pupil can learn is primarily related to family background	2.05	2.08
If pupils aren't disciplined at home, they aren't likely to accept discipline.	2.03	2.07
A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a pupil's home environment largely influences his/her achievement.	2.89	2.94
Teachers are not a very powerful influence on pupil achievement when all factors are considered.	3.86	3.89
The influences of a pupil's home experiences can be overcome by good teaching.	4.80	4.81
Even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach many pupils.	2.92	3.03
When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a pupil's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.	2.67	2.79
Some pupils need to be placed in slower groups so they are not subjected to unrealistic expectations.	3.45	3.39
My teacher training program and/or experience has given me the necessary skills to be an effective teacher.	5.52	5.45
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.62</b>	<b>32.94</b>

Table shows the means for female and male students on each item.

The total mean for female students = 32.62 Total Number of Items = 10

Therefore mean for female student teachers' teaching efficacy = 32.62/10 = 3.26.

Also, table above shows that the total mean for male students = 32.94.

Total Number of Items = 10.

Therefore mean for male student teachers' Teaching Efficacy = 32.94/10 = 3.29

Hypothesis H1 was formulated and tested statistically.

Ha: The teaching efficacy of female student teachers significantly differs from those of male student teachers.

H0: The teaching efficacy of female student teachers does not significantly differ from those of male student teachers.

**Testing of Hypothesis**

Table on Group Statistics on Teaching Efficacy

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Mean Difference
Female	242	3.26	1.16	1.35	0.03
Male	50	3.29	1.12	1.25	

Alpha (α) value = 0.05 and df = (N<sub>female</sub> + N<sub>male</sub>) - 2 = 290 The computer z-value = 0.063 less than z-critical value (1.645) the null hypothesis is retained and the alternative rejected. Thus there is no significant difference between the teaching efficacy of female and male student teachers.

There were two open-ended questionnaire items (23-24), which sought to get the participants' impressions about the training program. All of them complained about the tedious nature of the program, financial difficulties and lack of books. They enjoyed the programme because of the series of teaching practice experience they had.

This finding supports Ramey - Gassert (1996) who found that teaching efficacy of pre-service and in-service teachers was influenced by the quality of courses they took, access to resource, time and supportive colleagues and not specifically by gender

**Conclusion**

The whole issue about self-efficacy is the belief one has about one's competence. It is a motivational construct, which induces action and determines the choice people make in life. The ultimate goal of all learners is to succeed, so their various competence beliefs are paramount in their decision to succeed. The ability to act intentionally must be present as well as the ability to have control over one's environment and social structures. The social cognitive theory has provided a detailed explanation on how the learners behavioural and environmental information create their self — beliefs that in turn inform and alter subsequent behaviour and environments.

Mastery experiences are the most influential source of self-efficacy information. The educational implication of this is that it provokes self-enhancement in academic achievement and increases **student teachers** achievement in schools. Student teachers need to understand that low self-efficacy beliefs provoke a negative mental attitude and a cobweb mind. Most often, student teachers fail because they are not motivated to work hard. They can change their beliefs by developing a positive mental attitude. Failure is not an end but a means to inform one that, more effort is needed, and the right strategies should be used. Teachers and schools including parents have a major role to play here. This might help to motivate the students to succeed.

## Recommendations

1. Student teachers should be aware of the fact that the judgements made about their competence in their teaching are crucial components if they have to succeed. If they believe that they are going to fail then they will fail and the reverse will also be true. They really need to manifest confidence during teaching practice.
2. Student teachers should always take their own share of responsibility for pupils' academic output. This will enable them to prepare their lessons well and teach well.
3. Following item 24, almost all the respondents complained about the tedious nature of the training program. They should get used to the fact that the degree of the training programme is just the best offered to them. It takes much to become a professional.
4. The teachers and cooperating teachers should encourage the student teachers in their professional training. They should give student teachers positive and progress experiences and feedback that would increase the student teachers efficacy beliefs.
5. The education authorities should see the urgent need to create resource centres such as professional libraries and teaching materials for student teachers in their various localities to promote professional competent
6. The researcher recommends that the Ministry of Basic Education should also reconsider the minimum entry qualification into the teacher training colleges. The least entry qualification should be one "A" level or the Baccalaureate equivalent.
7. The education authorities should do well to reconsider the category of student teachers who are admitted to do the 1 year programme. In-service student teachers do not really have competence problems but the novice student teachers do. No matter the qualification of the novice student teachers, they should not be admitted to the 1 year programme because they undergo the training programme for less than nine months which is not enough for building professional competence.

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