

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

An Investigation of English Teacher  
Efficacy Beliefs:  
Subject-Specificity, Subject-Congruency,  
and Associated Factors.

Sally Hansen

2005

An Investigation of English Teacher Efficacy Beliefs:  
Subject-Specificity, Subject-Congruency, and Associated  
Factors.

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in Education at  
Massey University, Palmerston North,  
New Zealand  
by  
Sally Elizabeth Hansen  
2005

## ABSTRACT

Self-efficacy beliefs have a pervasive influence on human endeavours. Teaching is an occupation where efficacy beliefs will, in large part, shape teachers' performances and potentials to initiate new and exciting challenges for learners in their classrooms. Teacher efficacy has been associated with student motivation, teachers' adoptions of innovations, ratings of teachers' competence, and teachers' classroom management strategies. However, such findings are usually based on global measures of teacher efficacy, rather than on subject-specific teaching competencies.

A specialist subject teacher's sense of efficacy is not necessarily uniform across the many subject-specific tasks teachers are asked to perform. Specialist subject teachers are likely to exhibit differences in task-specific efficacy beliefs across a range of subject competencies, depending on differences in levels of enactive teaching experience, and opportunities to have engaged in successful teaching performance experiences.

An English Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire [ETEQ] was developed to assess English teacher efficacy beliefs. The English Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire was informed by Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy and Hoy's (1998) proposed integrated model. The ETEQ also included personal teaching efficacy [PTE] and general teaching efficacy [GTE] items from the Gibson and Dembo (1984) scale and the Riggs and Enochs (1990) scale.

A pilot study was conducted to test the English Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire. The pilot factor analysis generated a robust and meaningful English Teacher Efficacy Scale comprising four subscales that represented distinct domains of English. Self-efficacy data were gathered from a sample ( $n = 126$ ) of secondary English teachers (pre-service  $n = 47$  and practising  $n = 79$ ) across the range of subject tasks and competencies identified by the New Zealand national English Curriculum.

Results from a multivariate analysis of variance [MANOVA] with repeated measures revealed differences between secondary English teachers' efficacy beliefs across a

range of competencies, with English teachers displaying greater levels of positive efficacy towards more traditional subject tasks and competencies than towards more non-traditional newer subject tasks and competencies.

Analyses of variance also revealed that English teachers with an academic qualification in Literature, in contrast to some other related discipline, such as Media Studies or Drama, held more positive efficacy beliefs for teaching English. Results also showed that English teacher efficacy becomes more positive with increasing levels of teaching experience and increasing amounts of professional teacher development.

A comparison between practising teacher efficacy and pre-service teacher efficacy for teaching English found that practising teachers held more positive efficacy beliefs across the full range of competencies represented by the ETEQ. Such a finding suggests that Bandura's (1986) four sources of efficacy information -- mastery experiences, peer modelling, vicarious experiences and physiological and emotional states -- become more potent sources of efficacy information for practising teachers.

Multivariate analyses also suggested that teacher efficacy can be associated to a slight extent with student achievement levels, with teachers displaying greater levels of positive efficacy when working with students at higher achievement levels.

The findings of the present study indicate that teacher efficacy is associated with teachers having appropriate core subject content knowledge (academic qualifications), pedagogical knowledge gained through training and practical teaching experience, professional (pre-service and in-service) development opportunities so that teachers can be upskilled and updated. Such findings have important implications for teacher education, and for teaching and learning in general.

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my awesome mum, Jose, whose tenacity to squeeze the last drop of juice out of life, and not go “gently into that good night” was utterly inspiring. To my Dad, whose whole life was an example of the transformative power of education. To my husband and life companion, Paul, and my three children, Polly, Jasmine and Leif, who all are such wonderful teachers, and such very fine human beings. To Myah and Ella, my two beautiful granddaughters; may they always laugh, dance, and dream as they do now. And to all English teachers who continue, often against all odds, to believe in the liberating power of language and the passion of learning and teaching; for they are also the “dreamers of dreams”.

*And we are the dreamers of dreams*

*Yet we are the movers and shakers*

*Of the world forever, it seems.*

*Arthur O Shaughnessy*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My many thanks to all the English teachers who so willingly and graciously participated in this research, and clearly care so much about what they do.

Thanks to my supervisors, Professor James Chapman and Professor Bill Tunmer. Their sagacity, expertise, academic rigour and guidance were of the highest quality. Most of all I thank them both for the personal and professional beliefs they have always had in me. Such beliefs serve to nurture self-efficacy, and even adults need that! Thanks also to Professor Dick Harker for his statistical guidance and support.

Thanks to all the student teachers that I have had the privilege of teaching in the Graduate Diploma of Secondary Teaching programme. I never fail to be delighted year after year, at the voluminous dollops of creative energy, zany humour, love of language, and deep human warmth, that beginning teachers of English bring to my classes. And especially to Dan, whose words to me were a salutary reminder of the impact a teacher can have on a student:

*How do you begin to describe*

*One*

*Whose effect is profound,*

*Life-changing?*

*When the rhetoric rings over empty space*

*And the songs have all been sung,*

*Your lesson remains.*

And lastly, thanks to all the school students in my English classes over many years who daily reminded me what a truly noble profession teaching is. And most importantly, reminded me how strangely quirky and colourful life is, and not to take ourselves too seriously, but to endlessly celebrate the sense of humanity that should be the central nexus of every learning classroom.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	x
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Rationale for the Present Study	15
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature	17
The Research Domain	18
English in the New Zealand Curriculum	18
Self-Efficacy	22
Self-Efficacy and other Self-Concepts	24
Sources of Efficacy Expectations	26
Self-Efficacy for Performance and Learning	28
Attribution Theory	29
Teacher Efficacy	31
Assessment of Teacher Efficacy	34
Teacher Locus of Control Scale	34
Responsibility for Student Achievement	35
The Webb Scale	35
The Gibson and Dembo Efficacy Scale	36
Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument	37
The Ashton Vignettes	37
General Teaching Efficacy and Personal Teaching Efficacy	38
Bandura's Extended Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale	39
Optimal Levels of Specificity	40

An Integrated Model of Teacher Efficacy	43
Teacher Knowledge	45
Academic Qualifications, Training and Professional Development	45
Teacher Experience	46
Teacher Efficacy and Student Achievement Levels	48
Conclusion	50
 Chapter 3: Research Questions and Hypotheses	 51
The Research Focus	51
Congruency and Specificity	52
Research Question 1	52
Hypothesis 1	52
1.1	52
1.2	52
Rationale	52
Associated Factors	54
Research Question 2	54
Hypothesis 2	54
2.1	54
Rationale	54
2.2	55
Rationale	55
2.3	55
Rationale	55
Pre-service Teachers and Practising Teachers	56
Research Question 3	56
Hypothesis 3	56
Rationale	56
Teacher Efficacy and Student Achievement Levels	57
Research Question 4	57
Hypothesis 4	57
Rationale	57

Chapter 4: Scale Development and Pilot Study	58
Design	58
The English Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire	58
Rationale	58
Item Selection	58
Pilot Study	62
Sample	62
Establishing the English Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire Scale	62
Factor Composition and Psychometric Properties	63
Correlations	68
Summary of the Factor Structure and Composition	69
Qualitative Data	70
Confidence - Knowledge and Teaching	70
Confidence in Teaching Viewing and Presenting	71
 Chapter 5: English Teacher Efficacy	 72
Sample Selection	72
Practising English Teachers	72
Pre-Service English Teachers	72
Ethical Considerations	73
Sample Characteristics	73
Results	77
Hypothesis 1	77
Hypothesis 1.1 and Hypothesis 1.2	77
Hypothesis 2	80
Hypothesis 2.1	80
Hypothesis 2.2	81
Hypothesis 2.3	83
Hypothesis 3	85
Hypothesis 4	86
Qualitative Data	90
Confidence-Knowledge and Teaching [CKT]	90

Teacher Efficacy and Pedagogical Confidence	90
Teacher Efficacy and New Ideas and Innovations	91
Literacy Concerns	92
Lack of Mastery Experiences	93
The Reality Shock Phenomenon	93
Positive Self-Efficacy	94
Idealism and Passion	94
Confidence in Teaching Literary Response [ <i>CTLR</i> ]	94
Confidence in Teaching Viewing and Presenting [ <i>CTVP</i> ]	95
Confidence in Selection, Assessment & Expertise ( <i>CSAE</i> )	96
Assessment Workload	96
Task Design and Assessment	97
Assessing Against the Curriculum	97
Expertise	97
Academic Qualifications & Professional Development	98
Lack of Requisite Skills and Knowledge	98
Professional Development & Teacher Confidence	98
 Chapter 6: Discussion	 101
Synthesis of Findings	111
The English Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire and Teacher Efficacy Research	112
 Chapter 7: Conclusion	 117
Further Considerations and Recommendations	118
 References	 123
Appendix A	141

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	<i>Distribution of Qualification Focus for Pilot Sample</i>	62
Table 2	<i>Items and Factor Loadings for Confidence in Knowledge and Teaching [CKT]</i>	64
Table 3	<i>Items and Factor Loadings for Confidence in Teaching Literary Response [CTLR]</i>	65
Table 4	<i>Items and Factor Loadings for Confidence in Teaching Viewing and Presenting [CTVP]</i>	66
Table 5	<i>Items and Factor Loadings for Confidence in Selection, Assessment and Expertise [CSAE]</i>	67
Table 6	<i>Means and Standard Deviations for the Four Teacher Efficacy Subscales</i>	68
Table 7	<i>Full Scale and Subscale Intercorrelations for the English Teacher Efficacy Questionnaire</i>	68
Table 8	<i>Gender Distribution of the Sample</i>	73
Table 9	<i>Age Distribution of Pre-Service Teachers, Practising Teachers and Total Sample</i>	74
Table 10	<i>Qualification Distribution of Pre-Service Teachers, Practising Teachers and Total Sample</i>	74
Table 11	<i>Professional Development Distribution for the Sample</i>	75
Table 12	<i>Teaching Experience Distribution for the Sample</i>	76
Table 13	<i>Means and Standard Deviations for the Teacher Efficacy Subscales</i>	77
Table 14	<i>Mean Differences and Effect Sizes (d) for the Four Teacher Efficacy Subscales</i>	78
Table 15	<i>Means and Standard Deviations for Gender on the Four Teacher Efficacy Subscales</i>	79
Table 16	<i>Summary of Univariate Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) and Effect Sizes (d) for Teacher Qualification Groups (Literature and Other) on the Teacher Efficacy Subscales</i>	81

Table 17	<i>Means, Standard Deviations, Mean Differences and Effect Sizes (d) for Teacher Experience Groupings on the Four Teacher Efficacy Subscales</i>	82
Table 18	<i>Means, Standard Deviations, Mean Differences and Effect Sizes (d) for Teacher Professional Development on the Teacher Efficacy Subscales</i>	84
Table 19	<i>Summary of Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) with Means, Standard Deviations and Effects Sizes (d) for the Two Teacher Groups on the Teacher Efficacy Subscales.</i>	86
Table 20	<i>Frequencies for Student Achievement Levels (Curriculum)</i>	88
Table 21	<i>Frequencies for Student Achievement Levels (Teacher Rating)</i>	88
Table 22	<i>Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Student Achievement Levels (Curriculum)</i>	89