

TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY DEVELOPMENT
IN AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

by
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to teachers... to those who have ever faced a teaching challenge that shook their confidence, those who have ever questioned their ability to keep teaching, or those who have wondered how to become effective, confident, resilient educators.

I also dedicate this to educational administrators, instructional coaches, and teacher mentors. May you be enlightened as to the powerful influence you have to guide teachers to greater levels of confidence, commitment, and successful teaching outcomes.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my late mother, Deanna Zerbe, whose love, wisdom, support, courage and unstoppable tenacity will forever inspire me.

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GLOSSARY

Teacher self-efficacy is ‘the teacher’s belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context.’ (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 233).

Collective school efficacy measures a group belief. It utilizes “we” statements and requires teachers to assess their colleagues’ beliefs in addition to their own beliefs (Goddard et al., 2000).

Locus of control is the extent to which teachers believe they can control the reinforcement of their actions.

Cognitive processes are “thinking processes involved in the acquisition, organization and use of information (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). Cognitive processing determines what information is attended to and remembered, what information is considered credible, and how information is appraised (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Self-Reflection refers to teachers’ deliberate attention to their behavior and student responses in the classroom.

Self-Regulation is deliberate attention to one’s own behavior or affective state.

Growth Mindset. This perspective views every challenge as an opportunity to grow. Failure does not exist because change and growth are always options. Rather than innate skills people just have or don’t have, success is something that can be learned. Therefore, lack of success is simply part of learning and growing.

Cognitive Flexibility is awareness that alternative thinking and behavior are available.

GLOSSARY CONTINUED

Mental Models are structures of knowledge that are constructed to represent a situation (Ruff & Shoho, 2005). Mental models utilize a memory system of previously acquired and organized information, active observation of the current situation, and implementation of mentally designed solutions.

The Gold Standard refers to “something that is considered to be the best and that is used to judge the quality or level of other, similar things” (Merriam-Webster).

Dissonance is defined as “a lack of agreement” (Merriam Webster) between teacher’s expectations and reality.

Equilibrium is the opposite of dissonance. It refers to agreement between expectations and reality.

Perspective Shift refers to a change of thinking about a challenge, situation, or context.

Intentional Practice refers to identification and consistent implementation of specific solutions to specific challenges.

Self-Efficacy Growth. Teachers self-assess their competence to handle a specific teaching task as higher than a previous self-assessment.

ABSTRACT

As the teaching profession becomes increasingly challenging and teachers leave the profession at an alarming rate, school leaders need to understand the factors that influence teacher resiliency and longevity. A teacher's self-efficacy beliefs have been found to affect teacher's emotional and physiological well being (Bandura & Locke, 2003), job satisfaction (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steck, & Malone, 2006, Hoigaard, Giske, & Sundsli, 2012), and stress management (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy also impacts effort and performance (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), professional commitment (Coladarci, 1992; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007, 2011; Klassen et al., 2013), and longevity in the profession (Wentzel & Wigfield, 2009). In consideration of the value of teacher self-efficacy, there is a lack of qualitative research explaining how self-efficacy develops in teachers.

The present study used a qualitative phenomenology methodology to explore beliefs, factors, and experiences that influence the development and strengthening of self-efficacy in teachers. The choice of a phenomenological study reflected my belief that the best way to grasp the very essence of individual teacher beliefs was to dialogue with teachers about their lived experiences in the context of a particular situation (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2013). The present study utilized focus groups and individual conversations with teachers in a K-12 international school in the Dominican Republic. This study also embedded a quantitative teacher self-efficacy survey instrument to select participants and to describe their perceived self-efficacy levels.

The results indicated emerging themes of Connection, Support, Knowledge and Growth, Balance, and Gratification as factors shaping self-efficacy beliefs. This study contributes to our understanding of how self-efficacy develops by illuminating a self-efficacy growth cycle with eight stages: The Gold Standard, Teaching Challenges, Dissonance, Perspective, Teacher Behavior Change, Intentional Practice, Equilibrium, and Self-Efficacy Growth. The study also revealed cognitive processes of self-reflection, self-regulation, cognitive flexibility, growth mindset, intentional positivity, reminding oneself of calling/commitment and mental models of prior success and growth as catalysts to develop, change, and strengthen self-efficacy.

In conclusion, the results from this study may inform administrators, teachers, mentors, instructional coaches and university programs about intentional, proactive ways to guide teacher self-efficacy growth.

INTRODUCTION

Background for the Study

High levels of attrition have traditionally characterized the teaching profession, especially among novice teachers (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Attrition rates for teachers are twice the national average of other occupations (Ingersoll, 2002). Research on teacher attrition in the United States indicates that as many as 50% of new teachers leave the profession within their first five years in the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Brown, 2006; Grant, 2006). In addition to teachers leaving the profession for a different career path, many schools are plagued with a high turnover of teachers leaving to work in better schools. The average turnover rate for schools in the United States is 17 percent (Mancuso, Roberts, & White, 2010). This percentage is identical for most international American schools; however, research has found that particular international schools have a turnover rate as high as 60 percent (Mancuso et al., 2010). The context school for this study, an international school in the Dominican Republic, has maintained an average turnover rate of 23.4% for expatriate teachers over the past five years, with the highest turnover year reaching a 30% attrition rate and one year boasting a 10% attrition rate (SCS school data, 2017). Data indicates that this revolving door of teacher attrition is a primary cause of school staffing shortages and recruitment problems (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003, 2004).

High turnover has devastating effects on schools, including high costs for recruitment and training new teachers, stability, continuity, and morale. Concerning

student learning, turnover undermines a sense of community and cohesion among teachers, students, and families. High turnover rates have a direct negative impact on student achievement (Connors-Krikorian, 2005). A significant consequence for students is the recurrent loss of highly-qualified teachers.

Studies on teacher turnover in the United States have found that stressful working conditions in schools are the primary cause of high turnover (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Many teachers leave the profession because of disillusionment with their expectations of teaching as a fulfilling and rewarding occupation (Ingersoll & Smith, 2001). Instead, teachers find themselves in a highly stressful occupation, characterized by challenging student behavior, large class sizes, extended work days, low pay, and pressure from high stakes testing (Ingersoll & Smith, 2001; Whitehead, Ryba, & O'Driscoll, 2000). Furthermore, examination of international school turnover indicates that younger teachers are particularly more at risk to leave (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009; Mancuso et al., 2010). In the context international school for this study, the length of stay for expatriate teachers has averaged 4.16 years over the past five years, with an encouraging trend upwards to 4.6 years in 2017-2018. However, this data is skewed by veteran teachers with longer lengths of stay. Therefore, the average length of stay among younger teachers is closer to three years. Most novice teachers fulfill two or three year contracts and return to the United States to teach. Even for teachers who stay past their initial two or three year contracts, job stress often leads to physiological and emotional burnout, which has been shown to negatively impact student achievement (Covell, McNeil, & Howe, 2009). In fact, individual participants in this study with between four and ten years at the context

school attested that burnout due to workload was the primary factor in their decision to either scale back to part-time or in some cases, to leave the teaching profession altogether.

Few studies have researched teachers' emotional lives and thinking patterns that influence their persistence (Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, & Reyes, 2010). Teacher self-efficacy, which in simple terms is a teacher's confidence in their abilities to teach effectively despite challenges (Jennette, Harris, & Mesibov, 2003), offers considerable optimism for the dilemmas of teacher turnover and attrition. Current literature reveals that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs influence their emotional and physiological well-being (Bandura & Locke, 2003), their job satisfaction (Caprara et al., 2006; Hoigaard et al., 2012), and their ability to manage stress (Bandura, 1997). Additionally, self-efficacy affects effort and performance (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), commitment to teaching in general and the particular school (Coladarci, 1992; Ware and Kitsantas, 2007, 2011; Klassen et al., 2013), and longevity in the profession (Wentzel & Wigfield, 2009). Thereby, teacher self-efficacy has the potential to eliminate job related stress as the primary reason for leaving the teaching profession.

One theory that explains the relationships between teachers' thinking, self-efficacy, and positive outcomes is Bandura's (1977, 1978) theory of reciprocal causation. This theory states that personal factors (including emotions, physiological states, and thinking processes) interact reciprocally with the environment and behavior. For instance, the environment influences one's thinking, but thinking processes also affect one's perception of the environment. This theory suggests that stressful environmental factors

are partially constructed in the teacher's mind and may seem more problematic than actuality may warrant.

Current literature supports reciprocal causation theory, finding that teachers with higher self-efficacy deal with stress in different ways than teachers with lower self-efficacy (Klassen et al., 2013; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Parkay, Greenwood, Olejnik, & Roller, 1988). Teachers with low self-efficacy beliefs are not confident that they can influence student learning and will avoid tasks they believe are beyond their capabilities (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura and Locke, 2003). In the face of challenges, teachers with low self-efficacy tend to reduce their efforts or give up entirely (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Coladarci, 1992). Ashton and Webb (1986) explain how the teachers' perceptions hold them back, stating: "Teachers are preoccupied with thoughts of their own inadequacies and believe their difficulties are more serious than they actually are" (p. 3). This focus on inadequacies distracts teachers from focusing on instruction and student learning. Furthermore, a perception of challenges as more severe than they are increases a teacher's stress level, and potentially leads to feelings of hopelessness and burnout (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Therefore, it isn't surprising that teachers with low self-efficacy tend to have a negative perspective of their job and report feeling more stress (Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009). In contrast, teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy believe they can positively impact student success. These teachers are focused on student learning and tend to plan activities that challenge and engage students. In the face of difficulties, teachers with strong self-efficacy become more determined, give more effort, and focus more on quality instruction.

These outcomes provide a strong rationale for further research on teachers' cognitive processes regarding their self-efficacy beliefs. This thesis focuses on cognitive factors that teachers perceive as contributing to their self-efficacy. This study will further explore teachers' self-efficacy belief development and how this may impact teachers' intentions to persist in the teaching profession.

Statement of Problem

There are limited current studies investigating the factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs (Klassen et al., 2011). In fact, a review of teacher efficacy research from 1998 to 2009 and found only seven current studies that specifically examined teacher efficacy sources (Klassen et al., 2011). Although empirical research has identified sources that are proposed to affect teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1977), there are noteworthy limitations regarding this theory. The vastness of external and internal sources of self-efficacy has not been explored through qualitative methods. Bandura's four sources provide a narrow scope of identified sources (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011; Klassen & Tze, 2014). Some current researchers suggest that advancing research should be open to new possibilities of diverse sources of efficacy beliefs (Klassen et al., 2011). This assertion is supported by current literature finding sources distinct from Bandura's sources; including trust relationships and university training (Woolfolk & Spero, 2005; Cheung, 2008). This gap could be filled by qualitative research asking teachers to describe the external and internal factors that shape their self-efficacy.

Furthermore, the effect that cognitive processes have on the development of self-efficacy is unknown. Given that there is a direct, causal link between teachers' perceptions and low self-efficacy, research suggests that self-efficacy sources originate with teacher's internal perceptions rather than external circumstances or context (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998; Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 1977, 1978). Initial pilot study findings (Zerbe, 2017) also suggest that internal sources may be more dominant factors than external sources. In this pilot study, participants almost exclusively described internal factors that shaped their self-efficacy, namely self-reflection, internal motivation, and positive self-talk (Zerbe, 2017). These emerging findings suggest that there are cognitive processes that have not been fully explored. However, it appears that efficacy research has focused primarily on external factors, such as prior experiences, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion. There is a gap in the literature specifically investigating the relationships between cognitive processes and self-efficacy development (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Although there are some relevant quantitative studies, what is needed is qualitative research asking teachers to describe the internal cognitive processes they use to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the relationships among factors that shape self-efficacy beliefs for teachers at a particular international school in the Dominican Republic. This study also intends to understand teachers'

cognitive processes in the development of their self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy beliefs will be defined as ‘the teacher’s belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context.’ (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 233). The anticipated outcome of this study is an in-depth, personal understanding of the phenomenon that will improve administrator’s insight for supporting teacher self-efficacy. Furthermore, this greater awareness and understanding could lead to school outcomes of teacher persistence and reduced turnover.

Guiding Research Questions

The following questions will guide this study:

1. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?
2. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe how they develop self-efficacy?
3. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

This study seeks to understand the factors that shape teacher beliefs and how those beliefs develop. There is existing literature from Bandura (1997) on sources of

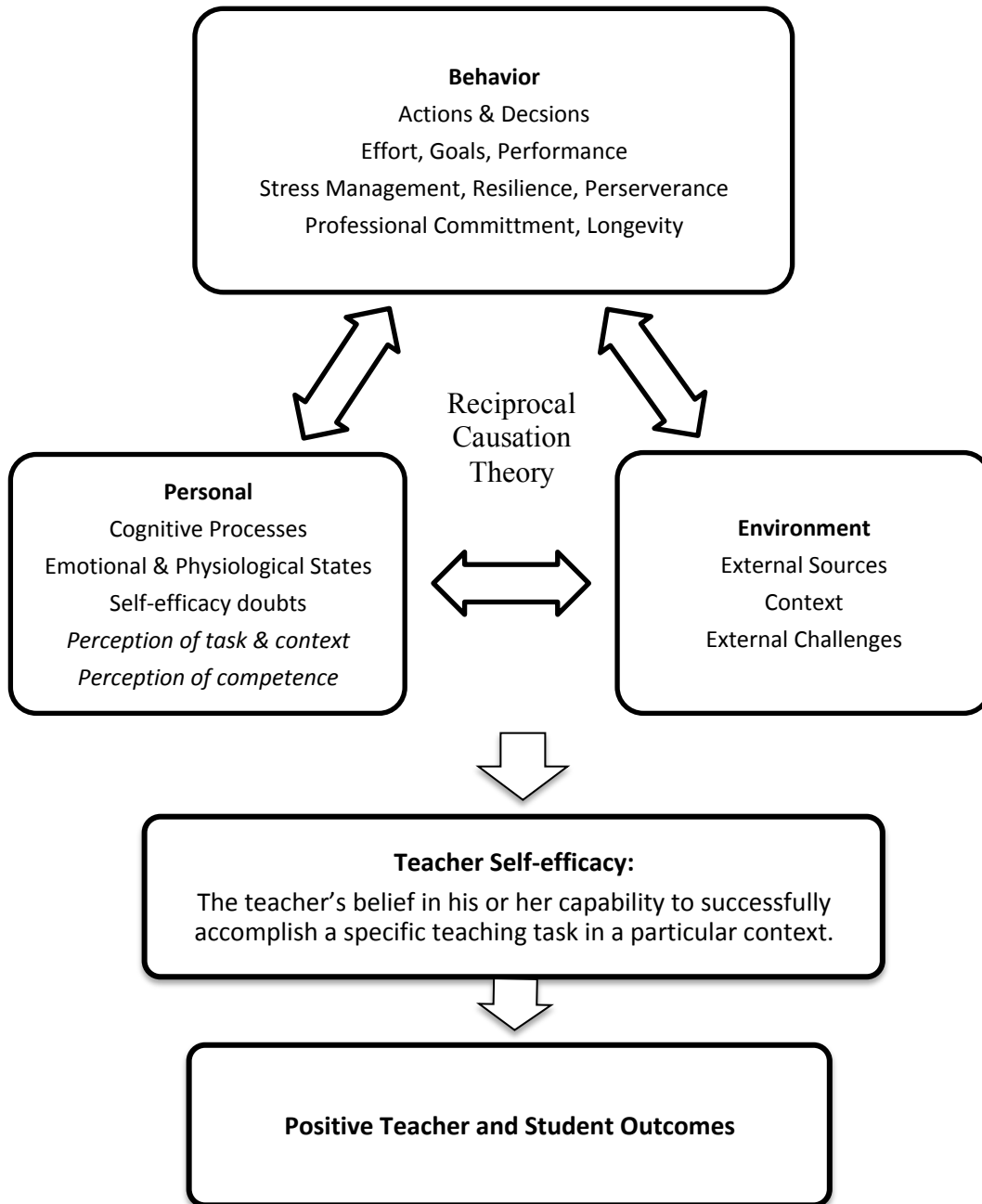
teacher efficacy, including: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states. There is also multiple research indicating that principal leadership (Ross & Gray, 2006), trust relationships (Woolfolk Hoy & Spero, 2005; Versland, Quintana, & Malloy, 2014; Cheung, 2008; Bryk & Schneider, 2003), university training (Cheung, 2008), and teacher longevity (Cheung, 2008) impact teacher efficacy.

This study seeks to understand teachers' cognitive processes as their self-efficacy beliefs develop. One proposed self-efficacy development process involves interchange among environment, behavior, and personal factors (Bandura, 1977; 1978). Following this understanding, teachers' perceptions of their environment influence their perspective of that environment. For instance, teachers' perceptions can make the teaching environment seem more stressful or less stressful. Another suggested development process involves two constructs: analysis of the teaching task and assessment of teaching competence (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Analysis of the teaching task refers to how the teacher perceives the current challenges of teaching. Assessment of teaching competence refers to how the teacher perceives their abilities to meet the challenges.

These cognitive processes create teacher self-efficacy, 'the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context.' (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 233). Research indicates that self-efficacy continues to change throughout a teacher's career (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007; Lev & Koslowsky, 2008; Cheung, 2008; Goddard, 2001). In particular, experiencing self-efficacy doubts can be beneficial to improving self-efficacy beliefs (Wheatley, 2002).

Research has shown that teacher efficacy has multiple positive outcomes for teachers, empowering them to truly enjoy their jobs, to be effective, and to persevere in the profession (Coladarci, 1992; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007, 2011; Klassen et al., 2013; Caprara et al., 2006, Hoigaard et al., 2012; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Bandura & Locke, 2003). High teacher self-efficacy leads to positive student outcomes, inspiring students to be more engaged in learning, to give more effort with challenges, and ultimately be more successful academically (Bandura, 1993; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Ross, 1995; Ross, Hogaboam-Gray, & Hannay, 2001).

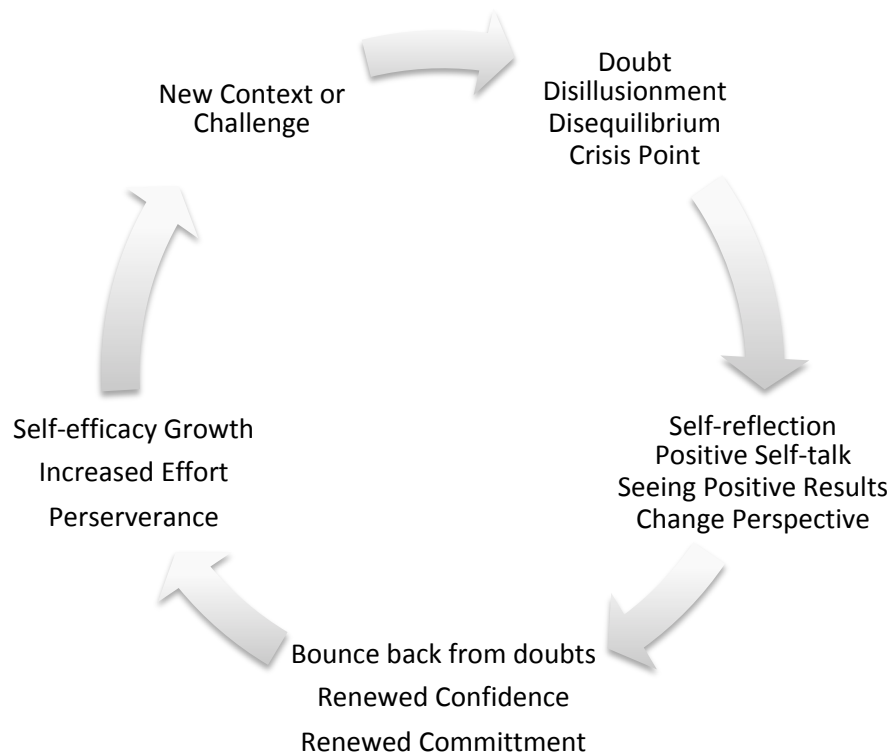
Figure 1. Emerging Conceptual Framework of Teacher Self-efficacy Development.



Another conceptual framework I will utilize in this study is a beneficial doubt cycle. Research indicates that experiencing self-efficacy doubts can be beneficial to

improving self-efficacy beliefs (Wheatley, 2002). Based on findings from my pilot study and adaptations from Wheatley's (2002) cycle of doubt, I created the following conceptual model. This model represents how teachers process through doubt and disillusionment when they encounter a new teaching challenge. Pilot study findings revealed that teacher utilize specific cognitive habits to bounce back from doubts and renew their confidence. This renewal acts to strengthen self-efficacy and increase perseverance.

Figure 2. Emerging Conceptual Framework of Beneficial Doubt Cycle (Unpublished pilot study, Zerbe, 2017; also adapted from Wheatley, 2002).



Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

Limitations of this research included the anonymity and personal identity protection inherent in its design. It was necessary to exclude some teacher quotes and personal information to protect individual teachers' identities. A second limitation was the fact that participation in this study was voluntary. Optional participation limited the number of participants available to represent specific sampling criteria, which required the researcher to be flexible in placing teachers into experience level categories.

Delimitations included the choice to interview teachers only in the same school in which I, as the researcher, was teaching. Another delimitation to this study was the progressive selection process of participants. I selected participants for focus groups, and subsequent individual interviews based on specific criteria aligned to my research questions.

I brought philosophical assumptions for phenomenology to this study. To begin, my study was based entirely on teachers' descriptions of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, I assumed that teachers' reality and beliefs were perceptions based on the meaning they created from their experiences. I assumed that these experiences were conscious, allowing participants to describe their perceptions of experiences in great detail (Creswell, 2013). My research approach was to accept the data without presumption or judgment. To accomplish this level of neutrality, I bracketed my own personal experiences with self-efficacy aside from the study. Therefore, I was keenly aware of my own prior experiences, yet I keep past knowledge detached while listening to participants' stories. The end product was "to describe what an experience means for

the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

Definitions of Terms

The following terms and concepts were useful for understanding this research.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is “the teacher’s belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 233). In essence, it is a teacher’s belief in how successful they will be at a specific teaching task. Self-efficacy is based in teachers’ perceptions of their capabilities, rather than their actual competence. Highly self-efficacious teachers have a perception that they can successfully bring out desired outcomes of student motivation and learning despite challenges. These teachers will approach problems and difficulties with confidence and persistence. Teachers with low self-efficacy believe success in teaching depends on environmental factors, largely out of their control. These teachers do not have confidence in their ability to make a difference in the face of teaching challenges. Consequently, self-efficacy beliefs become determinants of teachers’ behavior.

Collective Efficacy

Collective efficacy measures group beliefs by asking teachers to assess their colleagues’ beliefs in addition to their own beliefs (Goddard et al., 2000). Although the

present study focuses primarily on the efficacy of individual teachers (self-efficacy), it is important to clarify the self and collective efficacy concepts and their close relationship to one another. Researchers define collective efficacy as teachers' thoughts and beliefs about the efforts and capabilities of the entire school as a whole to have a positive effect on student achievement and the outcomes of students (Goddard et al., 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004; Goddard, O'Brien, & Goddard, 2006). Collective efficacy beliefs are not merely a sum of many individual beliefs, suggesting there is a unique shared belief system present in whole group dynamics that represents an entity in and of its own (Bandura, 1997). There is a bidirectional relationship between teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy, which has been validated by significant correlations between "I" (individual) and "we" (collective) belief statements (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard et al., 2004). Collective efficacy applies to the present study in that a significant portion of the relevant research literature in this study comes from collective efficacy studies. Although the construct is distinct from self-efficacy, the bidirectional relationship between the two allows me to generalize research findings from collective efficacy to self-efficacy.

Locus of Control

Rotter (1966) defined the teacher self-efficacy construct as the extent to which teachers believe they can control the reinforcement of their actions. This definition suggests that teachers either believe that environmental factors control student learning or that they control student learning in the classroom. According to this understanding, teachers assess the strength of environmental factors influencing student achievement and determine whether they can outweigh these influences through their teaching actions.

Cognitive Processes

For the purpose of this study, cognitive processes were defined as “thinking processes involved in the acquisition, organization and use of information” (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). How an individual processes information depends on their preexisting beliefs, biases, and the priority given to sources of information (Bandura, 1997).

Individuals may be predisposed towards optimistic or pessimistic expectations.

Individuals may carry biases in the way they attribute success or failure to personal capacity or to external factors outside the bounds of their control. Cognitive processes, therefore, refer to the interpretation of all incoming information. Even if the incoming information is exactly the same for two individuals, the interpretation of that information may be quite different for each. This results in unique perceptions, perspectives, and created “realities” for individuals. Some examples of specific cognitive processes that may relate to self-efficacy are described in detail towards the end of the literature review.

Significance of the Study

Research indicates teachers themselves are one of the most important variables that affect the success of a school (Hattie, 2009). Teachers with high self-efficacy handle teaching challenges differently than teachers with low efficacy (Brinson & Steiner, 2007). These teachers set more challenging goals for their students, work harder to achieve goals themselves, and persevere more when facing problems. Teacher beliefs have been shown to impact student motivation (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), self-esteem (Borton, 1991), self-direction (Rose &

Medway, 1981), engagement in class activities, and effort with learning challenges (Ross, 1995; Ross et al., 2001). Additionally, the significant correlation between high teacher efficacy and student academic achievement is well-established in the educational research community (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006; Bandura, 1993; Goddard et al., 2000; 2004).

The value of this study to teachers, administrators, and schools was to create an understanding of the factors that influence self-efficacy beliefs. Considering that higher self-efficacy leads to such paramount student and teacher outcomes, it behooves administrators to know how teacher efficacy develops. Such an understanding may provide administrators with insights for strengthening self-efficacy and thereby reducing turnover and attrition and improving school-wide outcomes.

Structure of the Study

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The following is a brief overview of the contents of chapters 2 through 5.

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, begins with a presentation of the main definitions and concepts of teacher efficacy. The chapter then discusses the theoretical framework for teacher self-efficacy research. This framework contains a review and critical analysis of teacher self-efficacy theories, including Rotter's locus of control theory (1966), Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977; 1986), and Tschannen-Moran et al.'s integrated model (1998). Bandura's suggested sources of teacher efficacy, as well as additional sources, are analyzed concerning the research supporting their validity. I

included a section that describes the practical significance of the present study for school outcomes and educational leadership. A further section targets what is known and not known regarding self-efficacy development, including discussions on self-efficacy malleability and Wheatley's (2002) doubt cycle.

Chapter 3, Methodology, outlines this qualitative study from a phenomenological research design approach. I explain my positionality as the researcher as it pertains to my assumptions and interpretive lens (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). This section includes a detailed description of a pilot study I conducted preceding the present study, which I will refer to in multiple sections throughout this paper. This chapter then addresses the participants in this study, including selection methods, recruitment procedures, and a description of the relevant characteristics of participants. Chapter 3 follows with strategies for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. The chapter also includes important strategies for ethical research and trustworthiness, specifically addressing: credibility, reliability, confirmability, and transferability. Following qualitative methodology, I describe how I practice reflexivity, accepting that my analysis is subjective and my interpretation of the data expresses my own biases (Creswell, 2013).

Chapter 4, Findings, is organized into themes that emerge from the participants' individual stories as they correspond to the research questions. Each theme includes rich and vivid descriptions of factors and cognitive processes involved in the teachers' self-efficacy development. This section consists of a significant amount of direct quotes to maintain the voices and original meanings of the participants.

Chapter 5, Discussion, begins with examples of how my interpretation and themes align or misalign to the research literature in Chapter 2. I present a conceptual framework that integrates my initial framework with the new results of this study. Chapter 5 further points out key findings of this study and my interpretation of their practical significance for educational leaders. The chapter concludes with important discoveries, the value of the inquiry, and next steps for ongoing research on this topic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of the following literature review is to (1) understand current knowledge about the sources of teacher self-efficacy beliefs and to (2) understand current knowledge about the development of teacher self-efficacy beliefs. The literature review presents relevant empirical literature and analyzes previous research theories on the sources of teacher efficacy beliefs. I will also describe the significance of self-efficacy to educational leadership as it correlates to positive teacher and student outcomes. This section further discusses the importance of this study to fill a research gap regarding (1) sources of self-efficacy and (2) self-efficacy development.

Theoretical Frameworks

The concept of teacher efficacy beliefs disseminated from two distinct theoretical frameworks. These include Rotter's locus of control theory (1966) and Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977; 1986). The following presents the development and validation of each theory, as well as a critical analysis of potential limitations. A discussion will compare and contrast the research on the two theories and explain how they apply to teacher self-efficacy. Additionally, I will present integrated conceptual models of teacher self-efficacy by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) and Goddard et al. (2000) that attempted to consolidate these two theories.

Locus of Control Theory

One philosophical assumption that is relevant to teacher self-efficacy is Rotter's locus of control theory (1966). This theory states that people can have an internal or external locus of control. An internal locus of control consists of a person believing that their actions determine the outcome of the situation. An external locus of control is a person's belief that outside circumstances govern their lives. Specifically, Rotter (1990) expressed:

Internal versus external control refers to the degree to which persons expect that a reinforcement or outcome of their behavior is contingent on their own behavior or personal characteristics versus the degree to which the persons expect that the reinforcement or outcome is a function of chance, luck, or fate, is under control of powerful others, or is simply unpredictable. (p. 489)

Development and Validity. The locus of control construct is part of a larger theory termed social learning theory (or human learning theory). Social learning theory (Rotter, 1954) asserts that, "a reinforcement acts to strengthen an expectancy that a particular behavior or event will be followed by that reinforcement in the future" (Rotter, 1966, p. 2). Essentially, individuals base their expectations and beliefs for future outcomes on past experiences. The initial validity of the locus of control hypothesis developed based on a series of controlled experiments (Rotter, 1966). These experiments compared two groups of participants, those instructed that success depended on their skill and those told that success depended on chance. Multiple studies showed that the skill participants had significantly more attempts before they gave up and higher expectations for future success (James & Rotter, 1958; Rotter, Liverant, & Croyvne, 1961; Holden & Rotter,

1962). Another finding revealed that chance participants had false expectations for future outcomes, including higher expectations after failure and lower expectations after success, similar to a gambling mindset (James & Rotter, 1958). Another study in the series indicated that internally motivated participants put forth more effort into tasks requiring skill than those requiring chance (Rotter & Mulry, 1965). These studies (and additional empirical studies) represent a consistent set of findings and thereby confirm the construct validity of the external vs. internal locus of control theory. The limitation of these controlled experiments is the difficulty of applying the results directly to real life situations. Rotter (1966) explains, “the direct application of theories of learning based upon experimenter controlled tasks to such [real life] learning is in grave doubt” (pp. 8-9).

Much of the support for the locus of control theory as a valid theoretical basis for teacher self-efficacy comes from Rand Corporation researchers studying the impact of educational interventions on student achievement in the 1970’s. Rand researchers utilized a 2-item survey to measure the extent to which teachers believe that they have high control over student achievement and motivation or that they have no control over these outcomes. Rand item 1 states: “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.” This question claimed to measure the extent to which a teacher believed that teaching and learning outcomes were internally controlled (by the teacher). Rand item 2 states: “If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.” This question claimed to measure the confidence of a teacher in

their abilities to overcome teaching challenges. Two separate studies utilizing this instrument showed remarkable results. One study found that teachers' beliefs in their own capabilities were significantly related to teachers' success in reading interventions for minority students (Armor et al., 1976). A second study found teacher beliefs as a strong predictor of teacher behavior change, student performance, and the continuation of project funded innovations (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977). However, questions about the reliability of the 2-question instrument presented a validity concern for these studies.

Subsequent researchers attempted to improve this reliability by developing more comprehensive measures, still building on the locus of control theoretical framework. Quantitative research studies by Guskey (1982, 1988) found significant positive relationships between teacher self-efficacy and teacher responsibility for student success and failure. Other researchers utilizing a similar efficacy measure found that teachers with high self-efficacy also had a stronger internal locus of control (Greenwood, Olejnik, & Parkay, 1990; Rose & Medway, 1981). Additional research by Ashton, Olejnik, Crocker, & McAuliffe (1982), utilizing their own efficacy scale, indicated that teachers with higher efficacy had less negative emotional responses in their teaching. However, an extensive review of efficacy studies found that researchers have not widely accepted these three scales and that little or no further efficacy studies have used them (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This lack of credence limits the validity of the locus of control instruments for teacher self-efficacy research.

Relationship to Teacher Self-Efficacy. Locus of control theory applies to teacher self-efficacy regarding the effect locus of control has on teacher's beliefs and behavior. Although direct application from controlled experiments to real life is limited, the initial research does provide partial support for the locus of control theory's hypotheses. Rotter (1966) postulated:

The individual who has a strong belief that he can control his own destiny is likely to (a) be more alert to those aspects of the environment which provide useful information for his future behavior; (b) take steps to improve his environmental condition; (c) place greater value on skill or achievement reinforcements and be generally more concerned with his ability, particularly his failures; and (d) be resistive to subtle attempts to influence him. (p. 25)

Current researchers in the field continue to utilize this theoretical lens, defining self-efficacy as a teacher's belief that students can be taught despite environment or family factors (Jennette et al., 2003). Current researchers assert that teachers with an internal locus of control believe they can impact students, leading to higher self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). In contrast, teachers with an external locus of control believe students are more influenced by external factors, further believing that they do not have much impact on student learning (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). This external outlook leads teachers to set limitations for teaching and learning goals. Researchers further assert that teachers with an external locus of control also have a reduced sense of accomplishment and lower self-esteem (Rotter, 1990; Covell et al., 2009).

My selection of the locus of control theory as part of the present study originates from my qualitative pilot study findings. Throughout in-depth interviews, high efficacy teachers primarily described internal cognitive processes and factors as having the most

significant influence on their self-efficacy (Zerbe, 2017). I describe this pilot study in detail in Chapter 4. Teachers described how external feedback and the environmental context could introduce doubts to their self-efficacy, but ultimately it was their own internal beliefs, perspectives, and motivation that kept them going strong. However, teachers with lower efficacy primarily described external factors that limited their ability to be successful with students. These findings suggest that teachers with high self-efficacy have an internal locus of control that propels them forward despite significant context challenges. This idea is important for teacher self-efficacy as teachers who believe they can control outcomes may have a greater impact on student learning than those who think circumstances limit them. One limitation of my findings, however, is that I did not use a self-efficacy instrument to verify the efficacy levels of teachers, nor did I utilize a locus of control instrument tool to measure internal or external motivation. My assessment was subjective, based on how teachers described their internal motivation and self-efficacy levels.

Social Cognitive Theory

A second philosophical assumption that underlies the concept of teacher self-efficacy is the social cognitive theory. Disseminated extensively by Albert Bandura, this theory states that a person's thoughts, ideas, personality type, behaviors, as well as their environment all contribute to their actions (Bandura, 1977). This theory drastically expanded the previous behaviorist theory, which claimed that people simply reacted to their surroundings. In contrast, the social cognitive theory states that there is not a direct cause of the context and one's behavior. Instead, this theory asserts that individuals can

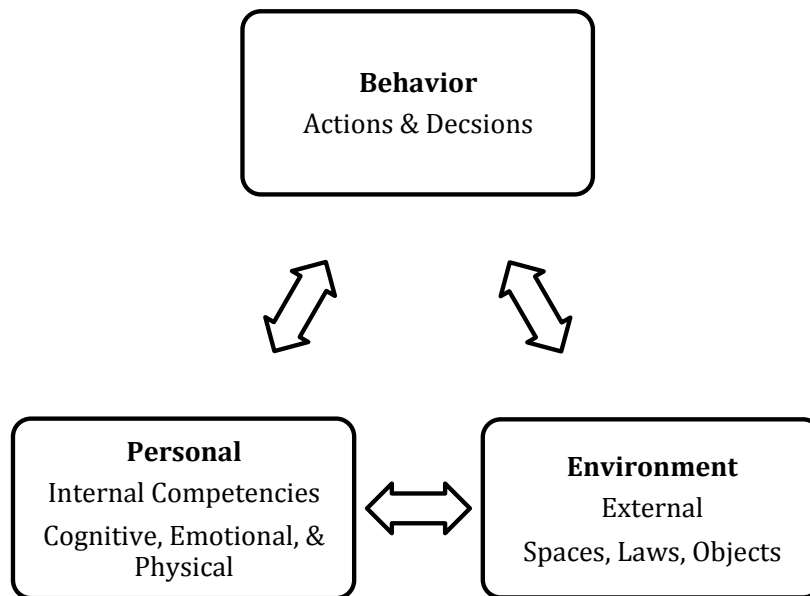
influence their own success through self-reflection and modification of their actions (Bandura, 1977).

Current researchers in this field have elaborated on the theory, explaining it as self-regulation (Pajares, 1995; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). According to this view, people have forethought in situations and can, therefore, plan alternative strategies (Pajares, 1995, 1996, 2002). This ability to be proactive allows people to have significant influence over their actions (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). The social cognitive theory further claims that an individual's beliefs regarding their capabilities have more influence on their actions than their real capabilities (Bandura, 1997). People can also self-reflect by thinking about and learning from past experiences, which leads to the ability to "alter their thinking and behavior" (Pajares, 1995, p. 4).

Reciprocal Determinism. Rooted in social cognitive theory is reciprocal determinism, a conceptual model stating that "psychological functioning involves a continuous reciprocal interaction between behavioral, cognitive, and environmental influences" (Bandura, 1978, p. 344). In this triangular model, all three factors are reciprocal because they partly determine the outcomes of one another. Cognitive factors partly determine how the context is perceived and what value is attached to various events. Environmental influences partly determine "what people attend to, perceive, and think" (Bandura, 1978, p. 345). This model acknowledges the power of cognitive perceptions in creating the reality of one's context, thereby suggesting that a person's thinking partially constructs their environment. This idea is significant to teacher self-efficacy in that teachers may perceive their teaching context to be more difficult or

stressful than actuality. Additionally, behavior partly determines what an individual thinks they can do, which then affects their subsequent actions (Bandura, 1978). This concept is significant to teacher self-efficacy in that teachers may perceive their abilities based on past experiences of success or failure.

Figure 3. Reciprocal Determinism Conceptual Model.



Relationship to Teacher Self-Efficacy. As a construct within Bandura’s social cognitive theory, teacher self-efficacy can be defined as, “teachers’ beliefs in their personal efficacy to motivate and promote learning that affect the types of learning environments they create and the level of academic progress their students achieve” (Bandura, 1993, p. 117). This theoretical lens suggests that a person’s beliefs about their abilities have more influence in determining their actions than the individual’s actual abilities. Specifically Bandura (1997) states,

Different people with similar skills, or the same person under different circumstances, may perform [differently] depending on fluctuations in their beliefs of personal efficacy (p. 37).

Current research continues to view teacher self-efficacy according to social cognitive theory, describing it as a teacher's confidence in their ability to "plan, organize, and carry out activities required to attain given educational goals" (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, p. 612).

Validity. I based my selection of Bandura's social cognitive theory on the fact that most current researchers in the field make use of the theory as a framework for efficacy research. For instance, there is a large body of research that consistently concurs with Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2012). Furthermore, this research base has added considerable validity to Bandura's theory through varied research methods and contexts.

Much of the validity regarding Bandura's social cognitive theory is rooted in empirical and current research on Bandura's suggested sources of teacher efficacy. There is general agreement among current researchers with Bandura's proposed sources. However, there is also an emerging research voice that questions the continual use of these sources, claims a weak research support base for the suggested sources, and advocates for more inclusive research (Klassen et al., 2011; Klassen & Tze, 2014). The following discussion presents these viewpoints and critically analyzes the supporting research evidence.

Bandura's Efficacy Sources

Empirical research according to social cognitive theory presents four sources of efficacy (Bandura, 1997). These include mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states. Researchers suggest that these sources affect teachers' perceptions of higher competence, which corresponds to higher efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998 and Goddard et al., 2000). Much of the empirical research to support Bandura's original claims about the four sources of efficacy relies on experimental studies and manipulation of variables in artificial settings. Consequently, one could argue that the initial research findings may not be replicable in real-life situations, thereby limiting the ecological validity of the four sources of efficacy.

Despite this potential validity limitation, there is ample current research that confirms self-efficacy and collective efficacy beliefs as significant predictors of teacher behaviors, student academic achievement, and many additional positive outcomes (Bandura, 2012). This body of research consists of multiple research studies that have consistently reiterated the substantial relationship between teacher efficacy, behavior, and performance. This research base supports the construct validity of perceived self-efficacy beliefs within the social cognitive theoretical framework. The following presents research supporting or limiting the validity of each of Bandura's four suggested sources, as well as their relationship to teacher self-efficacy.

Mastery Experiences. Mastery experiences are successes or failures in performance (Bandura, 1977). Bandura asserts that these experiences are the most influential source of efficacy beliefs. Bandura further suggests it is an individual's

assessment of contributing factors that affect their self-efficacy, rather than the successes or failures themselves. These various factors include: (a) the strength of existing efficacy beliefs, (b) the difficulty of the task, (c) the context, (d) the effort put into the task and (e) one's preconceptions about success and failure.

Evidence for the validity of mastery experiences includes quantitative and qualitative research comparing self-efficacy for novice and experienced teachers. Multiple studies have consistent findings that mastery experiences are a significant source of efficacy for novice teachers (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007; Poulou, 2007; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001). Research on collective efficacy also supports this, showing that mastery experiences correlate to collective efficacy, as well as resiliency, effort, and persistence in the face of difficulties (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard, 2001).

Vicarious Experiences. Vicarious experiences refer to observations of the successful or unsuccessful experiences of others. Bandura (1997) asserts that individuals assess their own capabilities in comparison to those of others. Seeing others achieve desired goals creates a perception that one can achieve the same results when following similar methods (Bandura, 1997). Vicarious experiences can be positive or negative influences. Bandura explains that comparing oneself with an individual of extremely high competence lowers one's efficacy because it seems difficult or impossible to achieve similar results. Comparing oneself with persons of similar capability and seeing them succeed raises one's efficacy. However, seeing persons of similar competence fail

consequently lowers one's efficacy. Others may include actual colleagues or symbolic models, such as a video of a teacher (Bandura, 1997).

Much of the support for vicarious experiences also incorporates social persuasion and comes from research on the influence of mentors for novice teachers. Multiple quantitative and qualitative studies have indicated that mentors have a significant positive impact on early teacher efficacy beliefs, specifically by modeling (vicarious experiences) and verbal support (social persuasion) (Klassen & Durksen, 2014; Moulding, Stewart, & Dunmeyer, 2014; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001; Moen & Allgood, 2009). One such study revealed a negative impact on novice teacher self-efficacy due to negative modeling by more experienced colleagues (Mulholland & Wallace, 2001). This supports Bandura's assertion that vicarious experiences are more influential for inexperienced teachers (Bandura, 1997).

Social Persuasion. Social persuasion refers to positive verbal communication that strengthens beliefs in one's capabilities to perform a task. Bandura (1997) asserts that social persuasion is most beneficial when encouragement is close to the individual's current capabilities. Bandura explains that this proximity persuades an individual to put forth a moderate amount of extra effort to improve. Furthermore, Bandura cautions that social persuasion is not effective if the person has an actual skill gap, clarifying that verbal encouragement cannot substitute for skill deficits. Current research by Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2013) found that social persuasion is of particular importance when teaching challenges are present. This finding echoes Bandura's hypothesis

regarding the powerful influence of social persuasion. Specifically, Bandura (1997) stated:

It is easier to sustain a sense of efficacy, especially when struggling with difficulties, if significant others express faith in one's capabilities than if they convey doubts. (p. 101)

There is research evidence indicating that colleague observation and feedback correlate to teacher efficacy (Ross, 1995; Whalstom & Louis, 2008). Additionally, multiple studies on mastery experiences and vicarious experiences also found social persuasion to be a significant source of self-efficacy, particularly for novice teachers (Klassen & Durksen, 2014; Moulding et al., 2014; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Evidence for the validity of social persuasion also comes from research on principal leadership. However, researchers do not consistently agree regarding the relationship of administrator social persuasion and self-efficacy. Quantitative studies on leadership styles of school principals have found that emotionally supportive leadership correlates to higher teacher efficacy (Ross & Gray, 2006; Littrell & Billingsly, 1994). One such study also found that principals' emotional support of teachers is a significant predictor of teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction, commitment, intent to stay, stress and health (Littrell & Billingsly, 1994). Further research findings indicate that school administrator feedback that is specific and action-oriented correlates to higher efficacy among the whole teaching staff (Ross & Gray, 2006; Brinson & Steiner, 2007). However, contrasting research indicates that administrator support does not influence efficacy. Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2007) found the following:

Neither novice nor career teachers seem to base their self-efficacy beliefs on the support of their administrators. Teachers form beliefs about their

capability to impact student learning whether support from administrators is available or not. (p. 23)

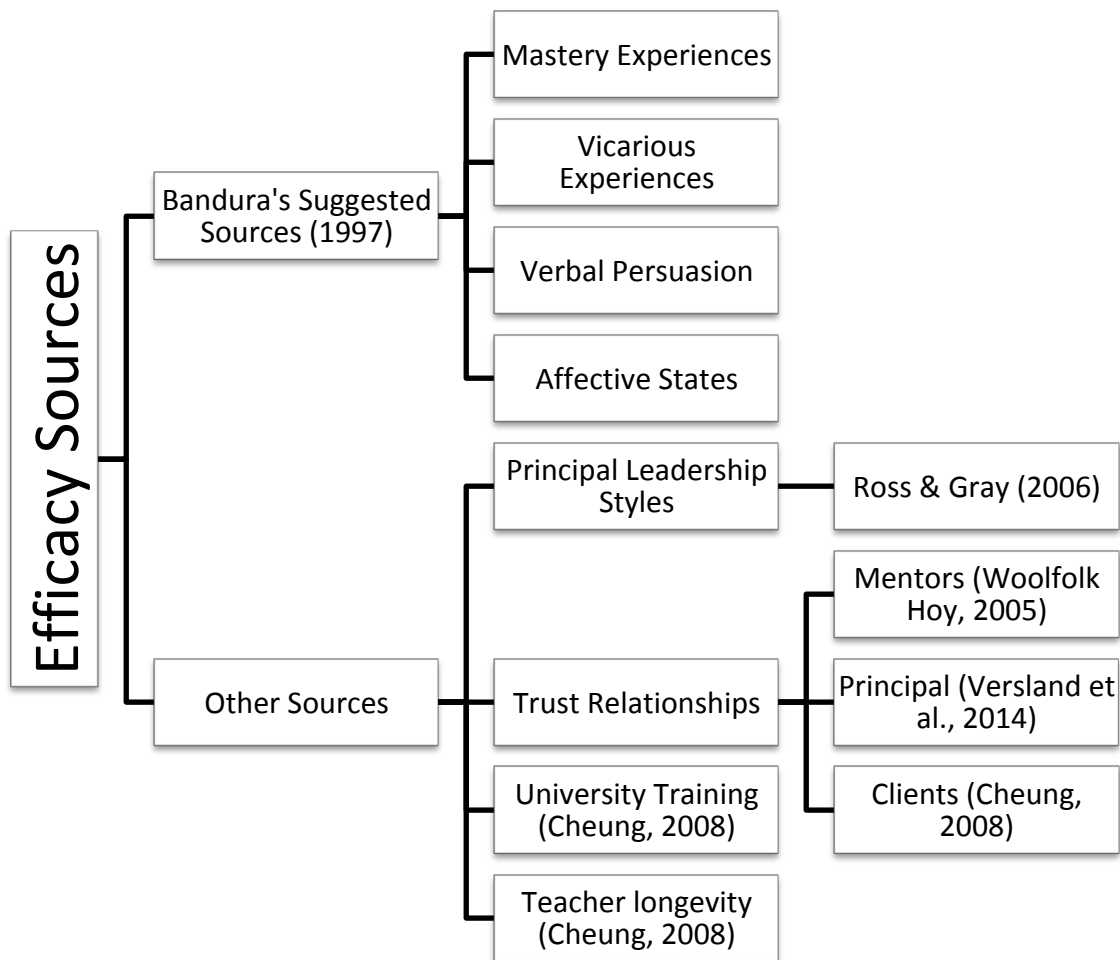
Affective States. The final component, affective states, depends on information individuals obtain from physiological and emotional states (Bandura, 1997). Emotional factors may be positive, such as motivation and stimulation (Goddard, 2001). However, emotional factors may also be negative, including too much stress, negative stress or over-stimulation. Bandura suggests that a person may interpret high physiological arousal and negative emotions as an indication of lower competence. Similarly, an individual may interpret a calm physiological state and positive emotions as indicators of greater competence. Bandura asserts that the important element is the interpretation or cognitive processing of the states, rather than the states themselves.

Regarding affective states, there is minimal research attention given to its particular relationship to teacher efficacy. Some support for this source comes from a controlled experimental study on affective states that utilized simulated dilemmas' and manipulation of participants' moods to determine the relationship of efficacy to achievement (Forgas, Bower, & Moylan, 1990). This study found that moods influence the cognitive processing of an experience, and specifically, that positive moods led to positive efficacy, and negative moods lowered efficacy. A limitation, however, of the controlled experiment method is that the study lacks ecological validity. This validity constraint limits the findings such that they may not have transferability to real-life contexts. Support for the validity of affective states also includes a 3-year longitudinal

case study, indicating that a teacher's physiological and emotional states influenced their perception of self-efficacy (Mulholland & Wallace, 2001).

Additional Sources. Existing studies also show that the four suggested sources are not the only categories that influence teacher self-efficacy. For instance, one quantitative study found no significant relationship between vicarious experiences and teacher self-efficacy (Woolfolk Hoy & Spero, 2005). Instead, the study found significant influences to include: (a) the teacher's relationship with the mentor and (b) support from the school and university. This study provides evidence for additional sources not previously considered, namely trust relationships and university training. Additionally, an open-ended qualitative survey of Chinese primary teachers, whereby teachers listed factors that influenced their self-efficacy beliefs, revealed (1) university training (2) respect and confidence from clients (students and parents) and (3) length of teaching experience as significant sources of their self-efficacy. (Cheung, 2008). Length of teaching experience provides some evidence for mastery experiences as a valid efficacy source. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that additional qualitative research is needed that seeks open-ended responses directly from teachers as to their perceptions of factors that influence their self-efficacy.

Figure 4. Teacher Efficacy Sources.



The Two Theories in Contrast

At a surface level, Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977; 1986) and Rotter's locus of control theory (1966) share a commonality in that both address an individual's belief to exercise control over environmental factors in their lives. However, it would be a mistaken assumption to conclude that these two theoretical perspectives are nearly the same. There are clear distinctions between them empirically, conceptually, and in their research outcomes. Empirically, the development of the two theories had virtually no

relationship with each other. Conceptually, Bandura (1997) asserts that perceived self-efficacy is different from a locus of control as seen in the belief distinctions. Locus of control theory is focused primarily on beliefs about the relationship between actions and outcomes, though not directly with self-efficacy. In contrast, social cognitive theory specifically examines beliefs about one's capability to produce certain actions. The primary distinction here is that believing an outcome is controllable is not the same as having confidence that one can accomplish the task successfully (Goddard et al., 2000). Another main difference between the two theories is that Bandura's theory asserts that self-efficacy is domain specific, rather than a general characteristic that is consistent across different tasks and contexts. Bandura takes this concept further; suggesting that there are different subsets of self-efficacy within a particular domain whereby a teacher's self-efficacy may fluctuate. In contrast, the locus of control theory suggests that one's locus of control is a stable characteristic, either externally or internally driven. Regarding research outcomes, Bandura's self-efficacy theory is a much stronger predictor of teacher behavior than the locus of control theory (Goddard et al., 2000). In conclusion, these examples demonstrate that the two ideologies are very dissimilar.

An Integrated Model of Teacher Self-Efficacy

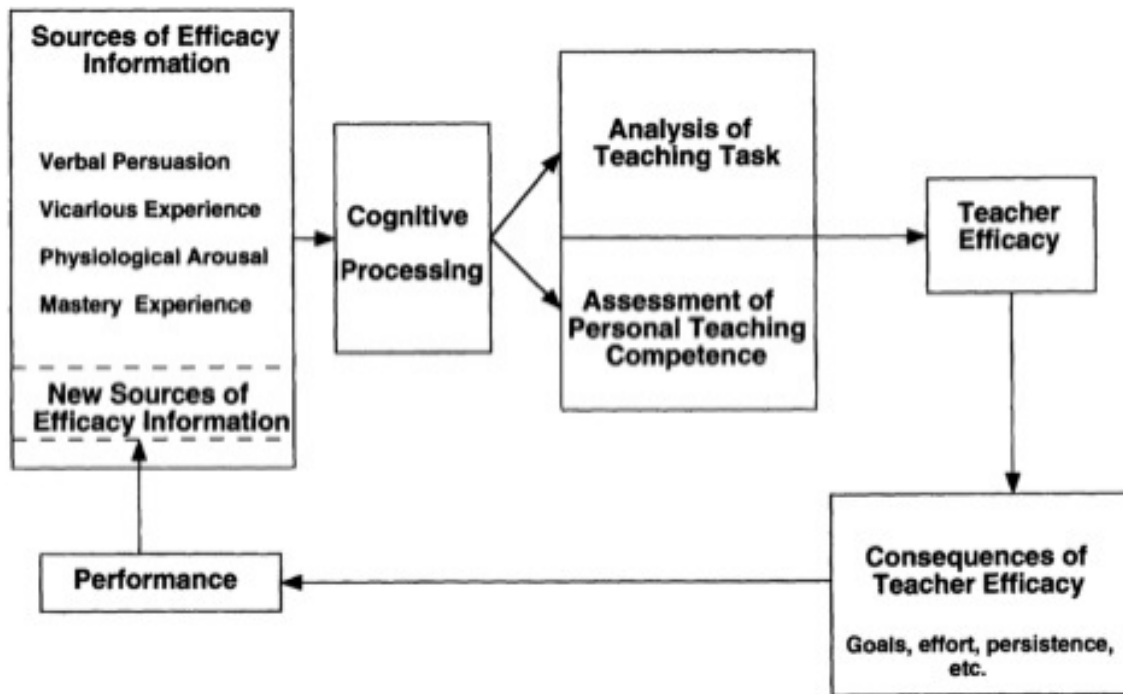
With the goal of consolidating Rotter's locus of control theory and Bandura's social cognitive theory, contemporary researchers have proposed a new paradigm of teacher self-efficacy. Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) integrated model of teacher self-efficacy reflects components from the original theoretical frameworks and also adds new

concepts based on the researchers' inquiry findings. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) re-defined teacher self-efficacy in the following description:

The teacher's belief in his or her capability or organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context. (p. 233)

This model includes Bandura's four suggested sources of efficacy and then prioritizes the teacher's interpretation of those sources. In contrast to Bandura's theory, this new paradigm emphasizes that environment and experiences do not automatically lead to high self-efficacy. Rather, this new interpretation indicates that there are multiple cognitive processes involved in creating teacher beliefs (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The sources of teacher efficacy are internalized and sorted out through the participant's unique perceptions. The cognitive processes lead to two teacher efficacy constructs: analysis of the teaching task and assessment of personal teaching competence. Analysis of the teaching task denotes the teacher's assessment of the challenges, barriers or limitations that one must overcome to experience success. Analysis of teaching competence refers to the teacher's assessment of their abilities to meet those challenges. These internal processes then create teacher efficacy and ultimately produce teacher outcomes of commitment, effort, and performance.

Figure 5. Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) Integrated Model of Teacher Efficacy Beliefs.



Cognitive Processes. In this integrated model, Bandura's sources of efficacy (social persuasion, vicarious experience, affective states, and mastery experience) serve as sources of information. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) emphasize that the interpretation process (cognitive processing) is the important piece that impacts efficacy beliefs. Cognitive processing determines what information is attended to and remembered, what information is considered credible, and how information is appraised. These interpretations influence how teachers evaluate their teaching context, their teaching responsibilities (analysis of teaching task), and their personal teaching competence (assessment of teaching competence).

Analysis of the Teaching Task. Teachers assess what it would take to be successful. These factors include students' characteristics, availability of resources, and

community support. Teachers also take into account the challenges, barriers or limitations that must be overcome in order to experience success. Positive task analysis is the perception that teachers have what it takes to overcome challenges. Negative task analysis is the perception that the limitations and barriers are beyond the capabilities of the teachers to effectively handle. This construct is similar to Rotter's external locus of control since it includes an analysis of physical resources available (materials, technology, physical space) as well as the environment or context (leadership, school culture, student characteristics). Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) assert that external factors have more influence on the efficacy beliefs of new teachers or for teachers facing new tasks.

Assessment of Teaching Competence. Teachers assess their teaching ability. Teachers make judgments regarding their capability to teach effectively despite challenges with the teaching task. The analysis may include consideration of skills, instructional methods, training, experience, and expertise. Positive competence is the perception that teachers have the necessary skills to help students succeed. Negative competence is the perception that teachers do not have the needed capabilities to overcome challenges and experience success. This construct is similar to Rotter's internal locus of control as it includes teacher's self-assessment of their control in the given context.

In contrast to the locus of control theory, this model emphasizes the importance of the context or task, explaining that different teaching tasks may lead to different assessments of competence. According to this understanding, a teacher's perception of

their skills will affect their self-efficacy differently depending on the given context or task. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) clarify the distinction in stating:

It is in making explicit the judgment of personal competence in light of an analysis of the task and situation that our model improves upon previous models. (p. 233)

In contrast to social cognitive theory, this model emphasizes how teachers' self-efficacy reflects their perceptions of their competence regarding the specific parameters of the teachers' content area or pedagogy. Specifically, Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) state that teachers' self-efficacy transfers to different tasks based on the perceived similarity between different tasks. This statement suggests that self-efficacy is very specific to given tasks and may fluctuate accordingly.

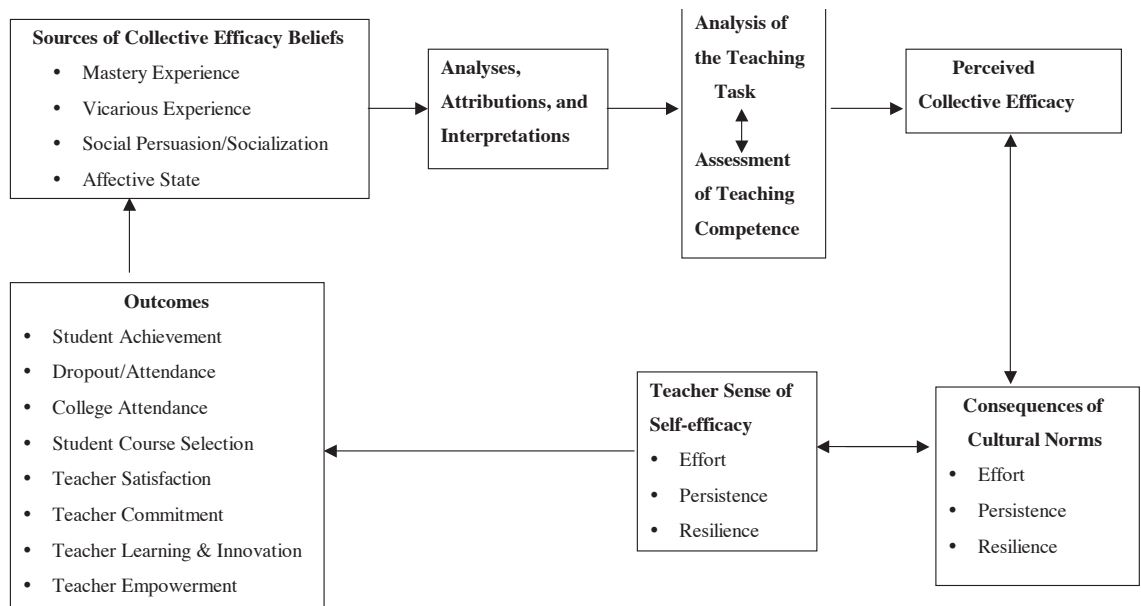
An Integrated Model of Collective Efficacy

Goddard et al. (2000) proposed a model of collective efficacy that integrates Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory and Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) model. This model is quite similar to Tschannen-Moran et al.'s integrated model. The primary distinction between the two is the conceptual shift from individual to collective beliefs. Efficacy began as an individual construct. Bandura (1997) and others expanded the self-efficacy construct to the group level, labeled as collective efficacy. Goddard et al. (2000) assert that this change is highly significant, explaining that collective efficacy is more than a sum of the individual teachers' self-efficacy. Rather, collective efficacy is a shared belief or a group attribute.

Based on the bidirectional relationship between self-efficacy and collective efficacy, a school with many individual teachers with high self-efficacy is likely also to

have high collective efficacy. Goddard and Goddard (2001) validated this assertion, finding collective efficacy beliefs to be a strong predictor of teacher self-efficacy. This finding has been further confirmed by a meta-analysis of 8 studies, which all reported moderate to strong correlations between teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy (Ramos, Silva, Pontes, Fernandez, & Nina, 2014). In this close relationship between individual and group beliefs, “teachers’ thoughts about their capabilities will be influenced by beliefs about group capability” (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). The significance of this research to self-efficacy is that colleagues' self-efficacy and school culture strongly influence individual teachers' self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). For example, one study found that being placed in a school culture that focused on past failures lowered teachers’ self-efficacy over time, particularly when their self-efficacy was moderate at the onset (Lev & Koslowsky, 2008).

Figure 6. Goddard et al.’s (2004) Proposed Model of Collective Efficacy in Schools.



Conclusion of Theoretical Frameworks

This discussion of the development, validation, and limitations of these main theoretical frameworks accepts that each has valuable contributions to the study of teacher self-efficacy. Therefore, I based my selection of Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) integrated model as a partial framework for my research on the fact that both locus of control theory and social cognitive theory merit inclusion in further efficacy research. An integrated model was also an appropriate fit with my particular research focus on the cognitive processes of self-efficacy development.

Still, I intentionally utilize the term *partial framework* based on the critical analysis of the theory limitations, namely the narrow scope for identified sources that influence self-efficacy (Klassen et al., 2011; Klassen & Tze, 2014). Therefore, my study primarily used a phenomenological methodology that will allow me to obtain comprehensive descriptions that portray the essence of teachers' experiences with self-efficacy development (Moustakas, 1994).

Current research utilizing these main theoretical frameworks has found that teacher self-efficacy is highly significant for positive school outcomes. The next section identifies the specific positive results that correlate to teacher self-efficacy.

Significance of Teacher Efficacy in Education

The following establishes the importance of teacher efficacy in schools for improving teacher retention and raising student achievement. It is highly beneficial for

educational leaders to understand the enormous impact that teacher self-efficacy has on students, teachers, and whole school outcomes.

Student Outcomes

Success in schools today is primarily defined by student achievement. School administrators have the monumental task of raising achievement scores for all students. Legislation in recent years connects student achievement growth to school funding for many schools, limiting budgets or even closing down schools for failure to raise achievement. More over, it is a school leader's moral and ethical obligation to help every student be successful to the greatest extent possible. These pressures leave school administrators to daily face the enormous challenge of locating and effectively implementing research proven methods to improve student academic achievement.

Teacher efficacy findings show that teachers' beliefs about helping students succeed could be the answer to closing the achievement gap. Teacher efficacy is considered to have a moderate effect on academic achievement (Brinson & Steiner, 2007). Goddard et al. (2000) found that collective efficacy explained 53 percent of the difference in mathematics achievement and 69 percent of the gap in reading achievement between schools. Also, a one-point increase in a school's collective efficacy score (on a six-point scale) correlated to approximately an 8.5-point increase in student achievement scores. Research indicates that teacher efficacy beliefs are more influential for student achievement than student or community characteristics (Goddard et al. 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). This evidence shows that the positive effects of teacher efficacy on student achievement outweigh the adverse effects of low socioeconomic status (Goddard

et al., 2000; Goddard, 2001; Bandura, 1993). Furthermore, the finding was significant after controlling for student demographic characteristics, prior achievement, and minority status aggregated at the school level (Goddard, 2001). In essence, teacher group beliefs have a greater effect on student achievement than low socio-economic status or other demographics representing the whole school student body. This finding is significant for school administrators who lead schools in poverty communities. It is also important for administrators who lead schools comprised of minority students, second language learners, or low student achievement for any reason.

Although student achievement is the most researched and recognized outcome of efficacy, teachers' self-efficacy has been found to contribute to multiple positive outcomes for students. These include motivation (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), increased self-esteem (Borton, 1991), self-direction (Rose & Medway, 1981), engagement in class activities and effort with learning challenges (Ross, 1995; Ross et al., 2001). These student outcomes are significant for educational leaders as they relate to overall school outcomes. Student engagement and motivation have the potential to decrease student discipline issues so that schools can focus more on student learning. Student self-esteem has the potential to decrease bullying, decrease suicide concerns, and improve the emotional and relational atmosphere in the school. Student self-direction and perseverance are important character traits that produce high graduation rates, as well as life-long success. These are the student outcomes that authenticate success in the highest regard for school leaders aspiring to be agents of change for families, communities, and students' futures.

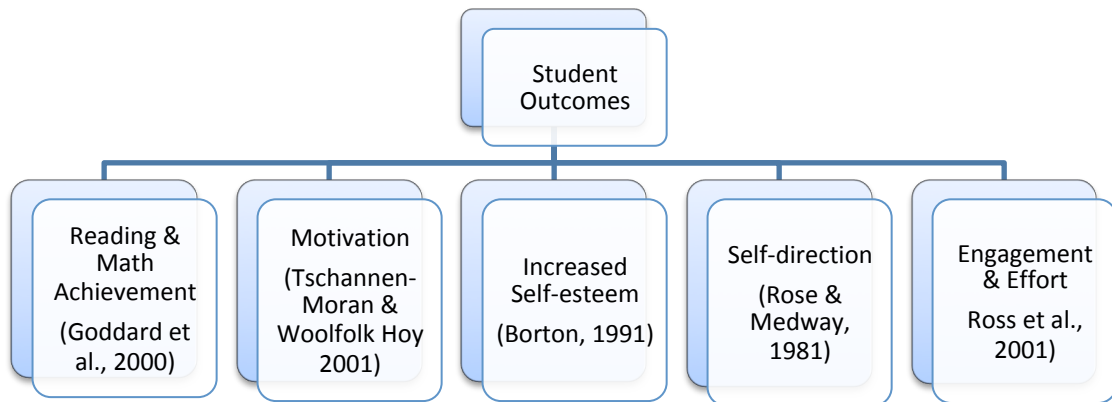


Figure 7. Student Outcomes from Teacher Self-efficacy.

Teacher Outcomes

The access point for educational leaders to affect positive student and school outcomes is through teacher self-efficacy. One reason efficacy is so influential for students is that teachers with high efficacy handle teaching challenges differently than teachers with low efficacy (Brinson & Steiner, 2007). These teachers set more challenging goals for their students, work harder to achieve goals themselves, and persevere more when facing problems. Recognizably, this is significant for student and school success. However, this level of student success realistically can only co-exist with a high level of teacher success. Research argues that the value of teacher well-being and self-efficacy is worthy of the same recognition as the positive benefits for others, namely students and the school. Thereby, the following presents relevant research describing the positive outcomes of self-efficacy that benefit teachers themselves, and through extension also benefit entire schools. These include: teacher well-being (Bandura & Locke, 2003), teacher job satisfaction (Caprara et al., 2006, Hoigaard et al., 2012), effective stress

management (Bandura, 1997), teacher professional commitment (Coladarci, 1992; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007, 2011; Klassen et al., 2013), and teacher resilience and perseverance (Ashton and Webb, 1986). Research has also shown that teachers' self-efficacy positively affects teaching effort and performance (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This section will discuss each of these teacher outcomes in depth and the relevant research evidence supporting their relationship to self-efficacy.

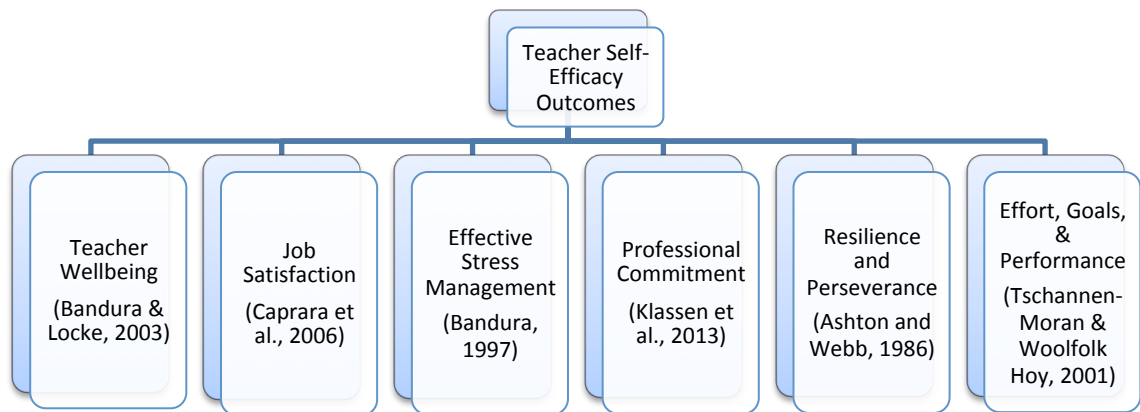


Figure 8. Teacher Self-efficacy Outcomes.

Teacher Well-being. Teacher emotional well-being is critical for schools since research indicates that teachers who have low self-efficacy and feel burned out tend to withdraw from positive relationships with students (Chang, 2009). This suggests that higher self-efficacy may safeguard teachers' emotional well-being, facilitating an emotional nurturing of their students. Teacher emotional well-being is essential for student learning due to the creation of a healthy, emotionally safe, and productive classroom climate (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

A significant predictor of teacher well-being is the ability to cope with stress (Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009). Self-efficacy acts as a mediator, protecting teachers from physical and emotional burnout due to stress. Research indicates that there is a strong negative correlation between self-efficacy and burnout, finding that higher self-efficacy relates to a lower risk of burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). More regarding self-efficacy and coping with stress is addressed below.

Stress Management. Self-efficacy is purported to enable teachers to deal better with stress and anxiety. For instance, a study on dental patient stress found that improving their self-efficacy had a more significant influence on anxiety than relaxation techniques or sedatives (Litt, Nye, & Shafer, 1993). One way that teachers with high self-efficacy cope with stress is their perceptions. For instance, research indicates that teachers with high self-efficacy are less likely to view teacher-parent relationships as a source of stress, compared to teachers with lower self-efficacy (Parkay et al., 1988). This suggests that teachers with low or high self-efficacy may perceive the same events and experiences quite differently. Teachers with low self-efficacy may tend to view situations as stressful, while high self-efficacy teachers may view the same situations as not stressful. Another effect of self-efficacy on stress management is how teachers deal with problems. Bandura (1997) explained that teachers with high self-efficacy work to resolve issues, while teachers with low self-efficacy tend to avoid them.

There is a mistaken assumption that high-stress contexts lower teachers' self-efficacy. On the contrary, quantitative and qualitative research findings assert that stress and self-efficacy are not significantly related (Klassen et al., 2013). In fact, multiple

studies found that high self-efficacy could coexist with high pressure. For example, teachers' self-efficacy is connected to their beliefs about managing students (Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990). This suggests that further research needs to focus more on teachers' perceptions and problem-solving strategies, as well as potential mediating factors that may act to bypass adverse effects of teaching stress.

Teacher Job Satisfaction. Teachers' self-efficacy affects job satisfaction as it relates to teachers' perceptions of their (a) competence and (b) trust for others. Regarding competence, teachers' beliefs in their ability to manage instruction and student behavior affect their level of satisfaction with teaching (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Steca, 2003). Researchers explain that self-efficacy meets a teacher's intrinsic need for competence, which then influences their job satisfaction (Caprara et al., 2006). Regarding trust, teachers with high efficacy are more likely to perceive all school stakeholders in a positive light. For instance, this positive perspective views administration, colleagues, students, and parents as all positively contributing to the school mission (Caprara et al., 2003). This implies that collective efficacy and collective job satisfaction have the potential to impact the morale of the whole school (Caprara et al., 2006). Caprara et al. (2006) describe this phenomenon, stating:

Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to be able to create the conditions and to promote the interpersonal networks that nourish and sustain their work satisfaction. (p. 485)

Teacher Professional Commitment. Research findings contend that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are critical to sustaining teachers' commitment to teaching (Caprara et al.,

2003). In fact, studies reveal that self-efficacy is a strong predictor of commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992). One reason for the research finding that confidence in one's capabilities to manage instruction correlates to higher commitment (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Bandura's (1997) research confirms this, finding that lower instructional confidence relates to lower commitment. Researchers have also discovered that self-efficacy seems to play a mediating role between job stress and teaching commitment (Chan, Lau, Nie, Lim, & Hogan, 2008). Klassen et al. (2014) found that novice teachers with higher self-efficacy did not lower their commitment to teaching because of stress from student behavior. Thereby, self-efficacy acts to safeguard teachers from decreasing commitment or from leaving the profession (Klassen et al., 2014; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007).

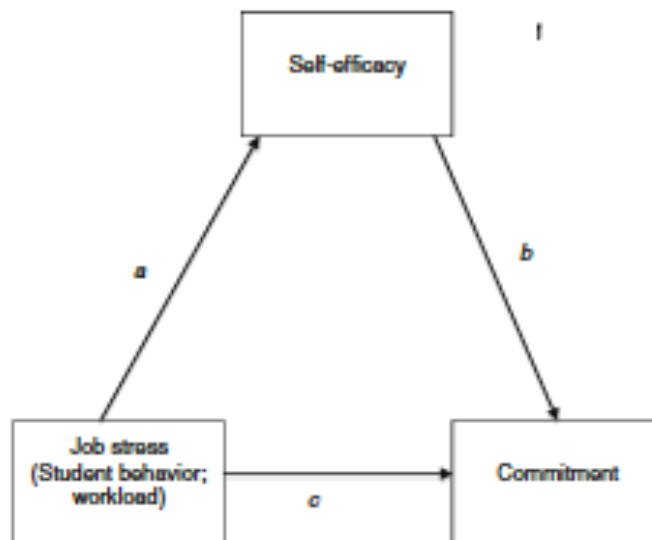


Figure 9. Klassen et al. (2014) Model of the Influence of Cultural Context on the Effects. of Job Stress on Occupational Commitment through Self-efficacy.

Teacher Resilience and Perseverance. A teacher's self-efficacy is understood to influence how resilient they are in challenging situations (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Researchers explain that self-efficacy beliefs about one's ability to make a positive impact supersede the present challenges. Further research has found that prior successful teaching experiences (mastery experiences) relate to resilience, effort, and persistence in the face of difficulties (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard, 2001). This finding suggests that experiences of making an impact help a teacher push through challenges to replicate the positive impact.

Teacher Effort and Performance. Research has documented self-efficacy as a predictor of teacher behavior. Such behaviors include: showing enthusiasm for teaching (Allinder, 1994), managing classroom problems (Chacon, 2005), keeping students on task (Podell & Soodak, 1993) and taking responsibility for students with special learning needs (Allinder, 1994). Driven by a motivation to better meet the needs of their students, teachers with high self-efficacy tend to be more open to experimenting with and implementing innovative teaching methods and classroom management approaches (Cousins & Walker, 1995). Research findings have also shown that teachers with high self-efficacy spend considerable time on planning and organization (Allinder, 1994). Research further indicates that high self-efficacy has a positive influence on students' achievement, signifying high teacher effectiveness and performance (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Development of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Establishing the importance of teacher efficacy in schools is currently limited to predicting teacher effectiveness and student achievement. The current study intends to create an understanding of how teacher efficacy beliefs develop and change. It behooves educational leaders to gain insight into the cognitive factors in teacher self-efficacy so that leaders can recognize and most appropriately nurture efficacy growth.

An approach to better understand cognitive factors is to identify and describe them. There are multiple subcategories of cognitive processes that researchers have already identified. This section presents and describes these various examples of cognitive processing.

This section also presents a discussion regarding the malleability of self-efficacy in both novice and experienced teachers. It is important for educational leaders to understand the unique differences between novice and experienced teachers in their self-efficacy development. Research indicates there are distinct external and internal factors between the groups.

Following this, I discuss the role of self-efficacy doubt. Doubt is relevant to self-efficacy development because research indicates that it has the potential to reinforce and strengthen self-efficacy beliefs. It is a given that teachers will face difficulties and doubts. The question is how self-efficacious teachers work through doubt so that it strengthens self-efficacy instead of lowering self-efficacy.

Cognitive Processes

The following subcategories represent the types of cognitive processes I sought to identify as teachers self-describe their thinking. This list of cognitive processes is by no means meant to be exhaustive, but rather to provide some structure to identifying and perhaps labeling specific thinking patterns. Examples of cognitive processes include growth mindset, self-regulation, problem solving, mental anticipatory processes, mental models, cognitive flexibility and mindfulness.

Growth Mindset. Individuals using a growth mindset assume that their skills can be improved instead of assuming that one has to be “born” with great teaching capacity. Rather than believing that abilities and talent bring success, this thinking process approaches challenges and even “failures” as opportunities to learn and grow (Dweck, 2012). The maladaptive opposite of the growth mindset is a fixed mindset, which assumes that “failure” indicates a lack of competence or potential that can’t be overcome, or that the person is a “failure” (Dweck, 2012).

Self-Regulation. This refers to the “exercise of influence over one’s own motivation, thought processes, emotional states and patterns of behavior” (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). Self-regulation includes self-observation and self-judgment (Schunk, 1990). Self-observation is where an individual deliberately attends to one’s behaviors. In self-judgment, an individual compares current outcomes with the intended goal. Satisfaction comes from moving towards or attaining goals and believing that progress is adequate (Schunk, 1990).

Problem Solving. This is a cognitive process that requires effort and concentration towards a goal. The goal or solution requires multiple analytical reasoning steps (Van Someren, Barnard, & Sandberg, 1994). Research indicates that teachers with strong self-efficacy think about and deal with problems and stressors differently than teachers with lower self-efficacy (Brinson & Steiner, 2007).

Mental Anticipatory Processes. Closely related to problem solving, these processes are mental preparation strategies that are productive or unproductive in coping with future stressful events. This cognitive process has four subscales: problem analysis, plan rehearsal, stagnant deliberation, and outcome fantasy (Feldman & Hayes, 2005). Problem analysis is an active contemplation of the antecedents and meaning of future stressful situations. Plan rehearsal involves envisioning the steps or strategies one could use to achieve the desired outcome. These two subscales are active, positive cognitive processes. Stagnant deliberation is the tendency to dwell repetitively on a stressful life problem and to experience unproductive thoughts about it. Outcome fantasy is a tendency to respond to potential problems by daydreaming or fantasizing about desired results while ignoring details of the problem-solving process. Stagnant deliberation and outcome fantasy are both maladaptive, passive cognitive processes.

Mental Models. These are structures of knowledge that are constructed to represent a situation (Ruff & Shoho, 2005). These models involve mentally designing abstract concepts that fit with prior or future concrete events. Mental models work through utilization of a memory system of previously acquired and organized

information, active observation of the current situation, and implementation of mentally designed solutions. These implementations are stored in the memory system, creating a cyclical process. Relating back to self-efficacy, a teacher utilizing mental models may visualize future success based on prior success.

Cognitive Flexibility. Research indicates that self-efficacy development, change, and growth are closely related to malleability and rigidity (Bandura, 1997; Henson, 2001; Henry, Bastian, & Fortner, 2011). Cognitive flexibility is a person's awareness that alternative thoughts and behaviors are available in a given situation, as well as a person's willingness and self-efficacy to enact these options (Martin & Rubin, 1995).

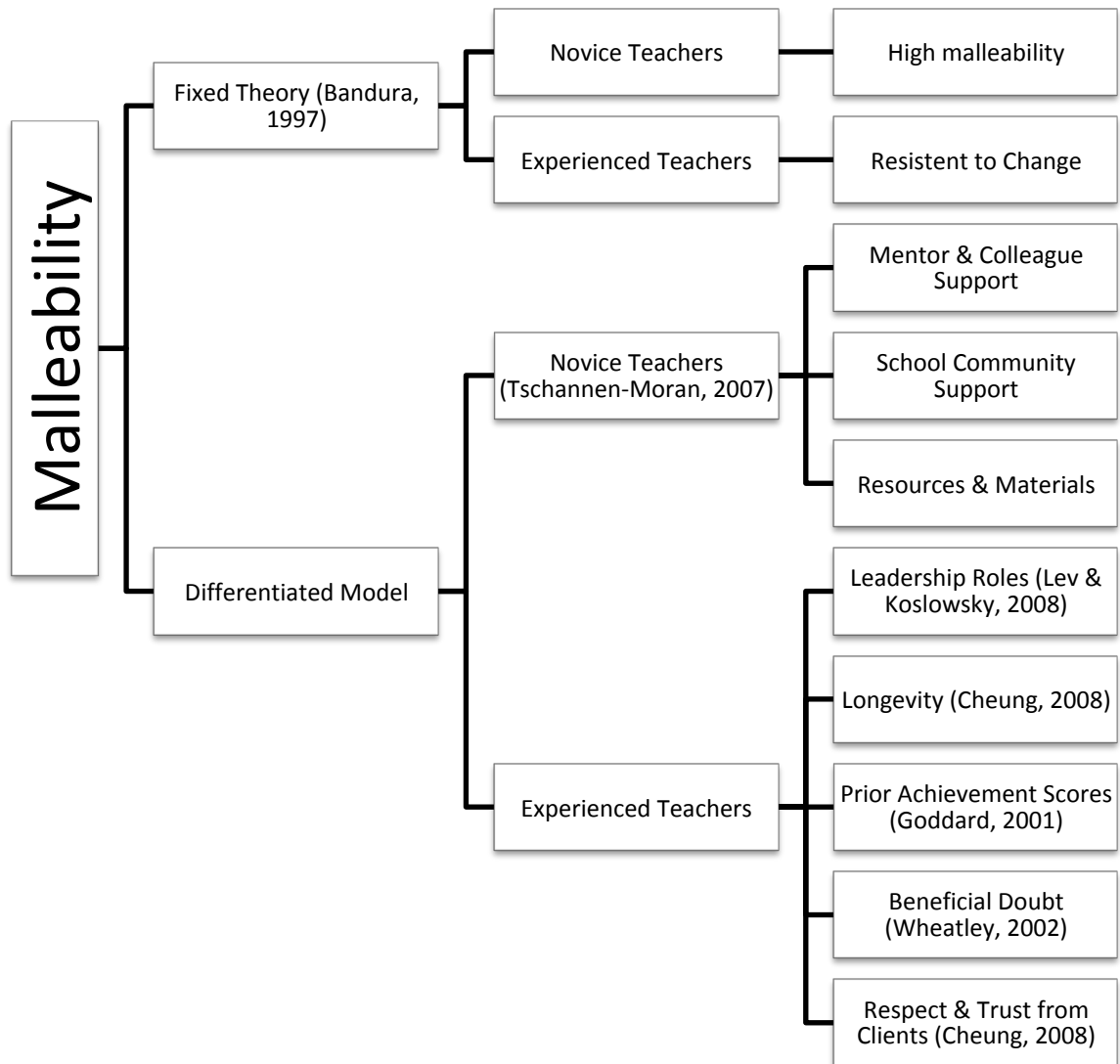
Mindfulness. Research indicates that active cognitive processes are more productive in handling doubt and disillusionment than passive thinking (Wheatley, 2002). Mindfulness is attention to and awareness of present-moment experience in daily life. A lack of mindfulness is the frequency of having experiences of acting on 'automatic pilot,' being preoccupied, and not paying attention to the present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Malleability of Efficacy

In exploring how self-efficacy develops in teachers, it is of interest to understand how self-efficacy may change throughout a teacher's career. Researchers assert that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are more malleable at the start of a teacher's career, suggesting that pre-service and novice teachers have the most malleable self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Henson, 2001). A study on pre-service teachers found that teacher self-

efficacy declined from high self-efficacy during college to lower self-efficacy during student teaching (Erdem & Demirel, 2007). This suggests that pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs do change either positively or negatively through their initial teaching experiences. Further research indicates that teachers can significantly improve their effectiveness in the first two years of teaching, which promotes momentous self-efficacy growth (Henry et al., 2011). These findings are significant for educational leadership in understanding that self-efficacy may be easier to change early in a teacher's career.

Figure 10. Self-efficacy Malleability Theories.



There is also a research notion asserting that self-efficacy beliefs are resistant to change once set (Bandura, 1997; Henry et al., 2011). Support of this view of malleability limitations includes a research finding that the lack of growth effectiveness after a teacher's third year leads to an inability to increase self-efficacy (Henry et al., 2011).

Further, this research has found that self-efficacy does not increase even after completing National Board Certification (Henry et al., 2011). These findings support the claim that self-efficacy may be quite set for experienced teachers. However, research indicating that other factors influence experienced teachers' self-efficacy challenges this assertion. Such factors include teacher leadership positions (Lev & Koslowsky, 2008), longevity in teaching (Cheung, 2008), prior achievement scores (Goddard, 2001), new contexts or new teaching tasks (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007; Lev & Koslowsky, 2008), doubt and uncertainty (Wheatley, 2002), and respect from parents and students (Cheung, 2008). This evidence indicates that researchers need to revisit the assertion of set malleability of experienced teachers. Self-efficacy change may be more pronounced in novice teachers, yet self-efficacy growth is applicable for both novice & experienced teachers.

There is research supporting significant differences between novice and experienced teachers regarding self-efficacy changes. Research indicates that mentor and colleague support, community support, and availability of resources and materials highly influence novice teachers' self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). In contrast, studies show that these factors have little influence on the self-efficacy of experienced teachers. Tschannen-Moran (2007) provides a rationale for this difference, stating, "Experienced teachers have apparently adapted to the typical isolation of their work lives and have learned to base their efficacy judgments on other sources" (p. 22). One such source that increases self-efficacy for experienced teachers is a promotion to leadership or supervisory positions (Lev & Koslowsky, 2008). This could include an

instructional coaching role, serving as a mentor, leading a committee, or serving on a school leadership team. Qualitative pilot study findings, preceding the present study, support this research, with multiple participants explicitly sharing that a coaching role or being asked to lead a committee significantly increased their self-efficacy as teachers (Zerbe, 2017). These findings create an understanding for educational leaders that novice and experienced teachers differ regarding the specific factors that improve their self-efficacy.

Efficacy Doubts

In exploring how self-efficacy develops, it is of interest to understand how self-efficacy may change with uncertainties. There is a commonly held assumption in efficacy research that low efficacy leads to adverse outcomes and that high efficacy is necessary for positive outcomes. However, another viewpoint suggests that efficacy doubts are part of efficacy growth. Wheatley (2002) explains that efficacy doubts motivate teachers to make changes. This occurs when doubts illuminate a gap between a teacher's lack of confidence and desire to be effective. Wheatley (2002) further depicts this cyclical process to include disequilibrium, self-reflection, and change. Specifically, he stated:

In brief, teacher efficacy doubts may aid reform by fostering teacher learning in many ways: including show and change, fostering teacher reflection, supporting motivation to learn and responsiveness to diversity, and promoting productive collaboration. (p. 16)

More precisely, Wheatley's research emphasizes the value of specific skill doubts rather than general teaching doubts, asserting that general doubts will likely lead to negative outcomes. The underlying assumption is that not all doubt is beneficial; rather

there must be a particular feature of the doubt than enables it to be advantageous to the teacher. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) described this beneficial doubt in as awareness and resiliency. Specifically, she stated:

A teacher who is aware of deficits in his or her capabilities in a certain circumstance but has a belief about how those deficits can be addressed will have a resilient sense of teacher efficacy. (p. 233)

This statement suggests that one feature of beneficial doubt is a healthy, realistic awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses. This feature then needs to merge with a second quality whereby the teacher has some knowledge that they can do something to improve their weaknesses (Wheatley, 2002). In essence, it's one thing to recognize weaknesses and another thing to know how to make improvements. Both are needed for doubt to advantage a teacher's self-efficacy.

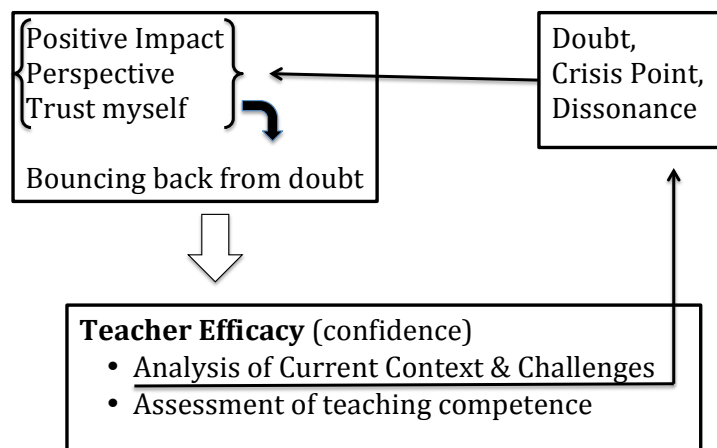
Beneficial doubt has the potential to strengthen the self-efficacy of both novice and experienced teachers. Research reports that novice teachers are highly prone to naïve optimism (McDonald, 1991; Wheatley, 2002). This untested optimism makes novice teachers highly susceptible to disillusionment and fast burnout (Wheatley, 2002).

Wheatley argues that some doubt and uncertainty, coupled with the experience of managing these, may prevent early burnout. Wheatley explains, "This optimism has not been sufficiently challenged and strengthened by the kind of doubts that are an integral part of full-time teaching" (p.12). Novice teachers with high efficacy are also at risk for exaggerated self-efficacy that doesn't match their actual abilities. This occurs when new teachers lack a realistic awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. Likewise, experienced teachers can develop a false sense of confidence that makes them vulnerable

to disillusionment and burnout (McDonald, 1991). This overconfidence of both novice and experienced teachers is purported to “blind them to the self-doubt that might advance them professionally” (Settlage, Southerland, Smith, & Ceglie, 2009, p. 119).

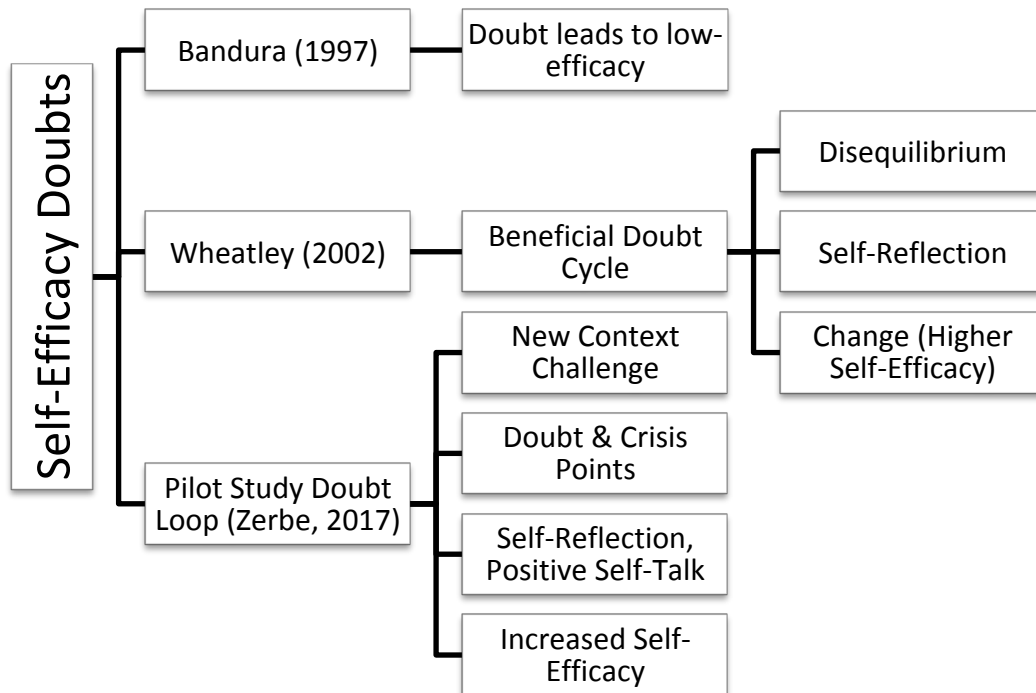
I chose to include this section on doubt based on my own qualitative pilot study findings. A key finding of this preliminary study was the discovery of a cyclical “doubt loop” quite similar to Wheatley’s (2002) description of the process of disequilibrium, self-reflection, and change. My in-depth interviews with experienced teachers revealed that doubts arose when teachers faced a new challenge or new context (Zerbe, 2017). My findings indicated that participants then utilized specific cognitive processes to bounce back from doubt. For instance, participants reminded themselves of their desire to make a positive impact on their students. Based on Tschannen-Moran et al.’s (1998) teacher self-efficacy constructs and the rich data from my in-depth interviews, I created an emerging conceptual diagram to illustrate the doubt process within teacher self-efficacy development.

Figure 11. Zerbe’s (2017) Emerging Conceptual Diagram of Self-efficacy Doubt Cycle.



These pilot study findings agree with Wheatley's research, arguing that (1) doubt is an integral part of self-efficacy development and that (2) it can have a positive affect on strengthening self-efficacy. This is in contrast to prior theories claiming that doubt and uncertainty lead to low self-efficacy. Figure 12 (see below) summarizes theoretical viewpoints on self-efficacy doubt from Bandura, Wheatley, and my own pilot study findings.

Figure 12. Self-Efficacy Doubt Theories.



For the present study, I modified this initial diagram to include Wheatley's (2002) research on doubt. Thereby, my conceptual model of this doubt cycle integrates Wheatley's themes of disequilibrium, self-reflection, and change with the qualitative themes I discovered in my pilot study research (see Figure 13 below). The next section, methodology, will describe this pilot study in more depth.

Figure 13. (See also Figure 2). Emerging Conceptual Framework of Beneficial Doubt Cycle (Unpublished pilot study, Zerbe, 2017; also adapted from Wheatley, 2002).



Significance of Educational Leadership for Teacher Efficacy

Introduction

Research indicates the role of the school principal is an important factor affecting teacher self-efficacy. Research shows that principal support positively and significantly correlates to teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness (Versland et al., 2014; DiPaola, 2012; Brinson & Steiner, 2007; Ross & Gray, 2006). This suggests that there are specific supportive leadership behaviors that correlate to teacher efficacy. Therefore, leadership

behaviors that support teachers in building competence and confidence to accomplish teaching tasks may improve individual and collective efficacy levels. The present study identified the role that school principals and other administrators play regarding teachers' perceptions of their confidence.

Principal Support

Mastery experiences improve teachers' perceptions of their own competence (Bandura, 1993). Following this understanding, one can reasonably assume correlations between teacher competence and teacher beliefs. A study by Littrell and Billingsly (1994) found that principals' emotional support of teachers came out as the highest, most significant predictor for teacher job satisfaction, commitment, intent to stay, stress, and health. Littrell (1992) defined emotional support as showing appreciation, keeping open lines of communication, encouraging colleague support and recognizing teacher's ideas. This same study found teacher commitment strongly correlated with principals' provision resources that teachers need to perform their duties. Also, job satisfaction strongly correlated with principals' provision of training and professional development for teachers to work effectively. Finally, Littrell and Billingsly found principals' provision of frequent, constructive feedback about teacher performance to significantly correlate to teacher growth. Littrell and Billingsly's research findings support the theory that principal behaviors impact teachers' effectiveness and job satisfaction. The present study further explored these relationships by asking teachers open-ended questions about specific ways that administrators have supported their self-efficacy (confidence).

Relational Trust

Trust is the foundation of school improvement (Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2011). Why is trust important? Teachers are dependent upon educational leaders to provide the resources they need to accomplish their teaching tasks. Likewise, educational leaders depend on teachers to support and carry out the mission of the school. This mutual dependence creates an uncomfortable vulnerability that is minimized by relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Trust creates a safe place to learn from mistakes and grow together. Bryk and Schneider identified four elements that individuals consider when they decide if someone is trustworthy, including: “respect, personal regard, competence in core role responsibilities, and personal integrity” (p. 42). Essentially, individuals discern the intentions of another and form an opinion of whether the individual can be trusted. Since it is impossible to truly know the intentions of another, assumptions are made based on the actions and non-verbal cues of others. Below, these are identified as principal behaviors.

“Principals' actions play a key role in developing and sustaining relational trust” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Research indicates that principal support behaviors promote a relationship of trust between the principal and the teacher (Versland et al., 2014). Furthermore, Versland et al. found trust relationships with principals to explain changes in teacher beliefs. In the study, the presence of well-established relationships of trust with the principal, teachers' self-efficacy soared. However, a change in leadership negatively affected teacher self-efficacy, explained by teachers as a lack of supportive behaviors and trust.

When interviewing teachers, Versland et al. found that teacher trust in the principal related to both principal task behaviors and relationship behaviors. In this study, principal task behaviors included management and instructional leadership. For example management tasks included student discipline, planning, and organization. Furthermore, instructional leadership included building teacher capacity and supporting student achievement. In this study, principal relationship behaviors included engagement in relationship building activities and developing trusting relationships with the teaching staff, good communication, and asking for staff input. When teachers perceived low principal competence in any of these areas, the teachers' trust, and consequently efficacy as a whole teaching staff (collective efficacy) was lower.

Research suggests that principal support behaviors may predict collective efficacy through the mediating affect of trust. Research shows that principal support behavior is the main predictor of teacher trust in the principal (Tarter, Bliss, & Hoy, 1989). Furthermore, Hoy and Koppersmith (1985) found that teacher trust in the principal and colleagues correlates to collective efficacy. For this reason, Goddard et al. (2000) included trust as one of three main constructs that form the collective efficacy measure. Therefore, trust is not a separate construct from teacher beliefs, but rather is part of the formation of those beliefs. This suggests that principal behaviors influence teacher trust in the principal and colleagues, which subsequently impacts teacher beliefs. However, current research has not defined the direct relationship between principal support and teacher efficacy.

Research on relational trust has focused exclusively on what educational leaders can do to attain and maintain teacher trust in them as leaders. Yet, trust is bestowed in two directions: trust towards administrators and trust towards teachers. Both directions are needed to create a relationship of trust between an administrator and a teacher. Still, research has not explicitly explored the significance of principal trust bestowed on teachers.

Culture of Teacher Collaboration

School building principals can also indirectly affect teacher beliefs (Brinson & Steiner, 2007). Principals can do this by supporting inter-collegial collaboration and support structures. Ross and Gray (2006) found that when teachers are engaged in collaboration processes to give one another feedback on teaching experiences, individual teachers build capacity in their abilities as teachers. Teachers also become more confident and become more positive in their attitude towards their teaching tasks. Another way principals can affect teacher efficacy is by structuring peer observations. Whalstom and Louis (2008) found that frequent, informal peer observation correlated to the following multiple positive outcomes. These include: 1) improved instruction, 2) improved teacher efficacy, and 3) improved teacher attitudes toward professional development. Ross (1995) discovered that both teacher collaboration and positive feedback on teacher observations directly affect teacher efficacy. Ross further suggests that these collegial experiences become an integrated part of the school's regular practices, which requires the principal's ongoing support. For optimal effectiveness, the administrator must intentionally plan collaboration processes, clearly define those processes, and include

horizontal cooperation among colleagues along with vertical interchanges with the principal.

Specific Leadership Behaviors Correlating to Teacher Efficacy

Principals directly affect group beliefs by taking actions to strengthen mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states. Ross and Gray's (2006) and Brinson and Steiner's (2007) findings on leadership actions found multiple actions to correlate to collective efficacy: 1) professional development, 2) specific, action-oriented feedback for teachers, and 3) shared decision-making. Their findings imply that school principals can implement these specific, direct actions to affect collective efficacy.

Conclusion

This review of teacher self-efficacy shows that teacher self-efficacy is a topic of utmost importance in the field of educational leadership. Self-efficacy is of great magnitude for teacher effectiveness and student academic success. Also noteworthy, is the affect self-efficacy has on teacher well being, stress management, job satisfaction, and longevity in the profession. The literature in this review reveals that there are notable research gaps in the study of self-efficacy. One gap is a narrow scope of identified sources that influence self-efficacy (Klassen et al., 2011; Klassen & Tze, 2014). Another gap is an understanding of the internal, cognitive processes involved in self-efficacy development (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). The significance of educational leadership for teacher self-efficacy has great potential based on research

indicating the affect of principal support and trust relationships on teacher self-efficacy. Furthermore, few qualitative studies have specifically investigated this phenomenon (Klassen et al., 2011).

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Teacher self-efficacy has a profoundly positive impact on students, teachers, and school communities as a whole. Teacher self-efficacy is defined as the “teacher’s belief in their abilities to organize and execute courses of action necessary to bring about desired results” (Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998, p. 203). Yet, self-efficacy development and growth in teachers is a complex and weakly understood phenomenon. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of teachers’ experiences in the context of an international school in the Dominican Republic to explain the phenomenon of teacher self-efficacy as described by the teachers themselves. This study aimed to disclose teachers’ cognitive processing lens or starting place from which they perceived themselves, others, and experiences. Another purpose of this study was to identify specific external and internal factors that shape self-efficacy; and in particular what value teachers placed on these factors as significant influencers on their self-efficacy. This study asked teachers to describe how they responded to and worked through pressure, challenge, stress, and change. I sought to understand the cognitive processing or other strategies teachers utilized to overcome self-doubts, frustration, and crisis points. An in-depth understanding of how these factors and thought processes affect self-efficacy may equip administrators and teachers to more intentionally work through teaching challenges. The following questions guided the inquiry:

1. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?
2. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe how they develop self-efficacy?
3. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?

This methodology section describes the research design and rationale for choosing a phenomenological approach. This section explains my positionality as a researcher by presenting my story of encountering the significance of this topic in my personal teaching journey (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). I will describe the pilot study for this study, including distinctions between the context of two studies and key findings from the pilot study. I will also introduce important characteristics of the participants and research site. This section contains a detailed description of the types of data collection, including a survey, open-ended essay, focus groups, and interviews. Further, I will address ethical issues, including trustworthiness, credibility, reliability, confirmability, transferability, and reflexivity.

Research Design

The nature of this study lent itself to a qualitative design rather than a quantitative design based on the following justification. Remarkable teacher and student outcomes present a strong rationale for creating a more intimate understanding of teacher self-

efficacy. Quantitative research has been helpful in identifying the relationship between self-efficacy and positive outcomes. However, qualitative research is needed to examine teachers' thinking and perceptions regarding the development of their self-efficacy.

Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) supports this research need, stating:

Qualitative research could explore what events and influences teachers attribute to the development of their efficacy beliefs...Interpretative case studies and qualitative investigations are needed to refine our understanding of the process of developing efficacy.' (p. 242)

Qualitative research explores “how people such as teachers... think and how they came to develop perspectives they hold” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 3). This valuable information on teachers’ internal processes is best extracted through dialoging with teachers about their experiences in their natural setting.

While a grounded theory methodology was used for the pilot study, and a case study and narrative were considered; phenomenology was selected for the present study. A phenomenological methodology was appropriate for the following reasons. This methodology was fitting in order to describe the experiences of teachers as they reflected on a particular phenomenon: the development of their teaching self-efficacy. Dialoging with teachers allowed for full disclosure of the phenomena as I listened to “what” the participants experienced and “how” they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, phenomenology requires a return to real, lived experiences described directly by those who have experienced them (Moustakas, 1994). Although school administrators may have insights about what factors help boost teacher confidence and competence; I felt it was extremely important to go directly to the primary source of teacher efficacy development, i.e. teachers themselves. Through using this methodology, I gained insight

into participants' perceptions about what their experiences have meant to them individually. Furthermore, phenomenological research seeks to make the invisible visible. To make cognitive processes visible, I used think-aloud protocols and interview questions that prompted teachers to identify and describe internal contemplations. Lastly, phenomenology is an approach that studies several individuals who have shared experiences and can provide an in-depth understanding of the essence of those experiences (Creswell, 2013). The aim of a phenomenological study is to provide a rich textured description of lived experiences.

There are two classifications of phenomenological research: hermeneutical phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology (Mousakas, 1994). In hermeneutical phenomenology, the researcher takes an interpretative approach with the purpose to unmask the phenomenon. The lived experiences of the researcher and participants are interwoven as the researcher makes no attempt to suspend personal opinions. Transcendental phenomenology, the approach I will use for this study, is a more descriptive, narrative approach that allows the phenomenon to speak for itself. In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher brackets, or removes, him or herself from the experience. The researcher may include his or her viewpoint; however, this is intentionally separated and identified as such. The intention is to suspend all presuppositions or judgments and to appreciate participant stories as fresh and new, as if they were experienced for the first time. The researcher presents participants' stories as a narrative that leaves the reader to interpret through their own lived experiences. In

transcendental phenomenology, the data speaks for itself through direct quotes and rich, thick description.

Phenomenological, qualitative research obliges the researcher to work backwards from the data. Therefore, in this study, the emergence of data through participants' descriptions determined the direction of the investigation, rather than any predetermined findings on my part. Although the pilot study indicated potential findings and much of the data confirmed initial findings, I was often surprised and intrigued by participants' descriptions.

Role of the Researcher (Positionality)

I approach this study through the lens of both a researcher and a teacher. As a researcher, I collected "field work" data from the participants' natural setting instead of a controlled laboratory setting. The field in this study consisted of teachers' classrooms and the school context in general. As a researcher, I intentionally selected the topic of self-efficacy for professional reasons. Having taught in a variety of schools and a variety of grade levels over the span of 13 years prior to this study, I had mostly successful teaching experiences that built my teaching self-efficacy. Even with more challenging teaching situations, I was usually able to approach the difficulty with the belief that I could overcome and still positively impact students. However, there was one particular teaching year in which I faced teaching challenges that made me question everything about myself as a teacher. I contemplated leaving the teaching profession. The main shock was that I assumed only beginning teachers encountered serious doubts, disillusionment, and crisis

points. Still there I was, with more than a decade of successful teaching, and completely at my wit's end. This experience prompted me to study self-efficacy more in depth. It also inspired me to conduct a pilot study interviewing experienced teachers to learn how they handled self-efficacy doubts. Through the pilot study, I learned that my experience with doubt and uncertainty was not unique. Rather, I learned that successful master teachers of more than 15 or 20 years still encounter challenges that lead to significant self-doubt.

My role in the research context was unique. I conducted my research in the same school in which I taught. The uniqueness was in the fact that I taught at this particular school at an earlier point in my teaching career. I left the school and returned to the school at the point of beginning my dissertation research. There was approximately a five-year gap between my leaving and returning. Therefore, although I was familiar with many aspects of the school, I had to approach my research with an unassuming attitude. I was aware that the school has changed since I left. Many of the teachers I sought out to interview were new colleagues with whom I had not yet built a strong rapport. However, the benefit of my unique position was that I was able to share in the “new teacher” challenges right alongside my colleagues. I believe this helped participants view me as someone who could understand and empathize with their experiences.

Pilot Study

In 2017, I conducted a pilot study for this dissertation to test my interview protocols with teachers. I had the intention to refine and clarify my research focus. The

following gives a detailed description of the pilot study's methodology, participants, and key findings.

For the pilot study, I utilized a constructivist grounded theory approach for which I interviewed five female elementary teachers in a public school in Northeastern Montana. At the time of the pilot study, I had built collegial relationships with these teachers by teaching alongside them over a span of four years. This closeness to the participants and the research field helped me understand their experiences. For the present dissertation study, I was also “in the field”; however, the school site was different, and many contextual factors were significantly different as well. The pilot study school was comprised of Native American students and located in a low socioeconomic community. Teaching at this school had significant challenges, including at-risk academic levels, needs for culturally relevant teaching, poverty, complex childhood trauma, challenging student behaviors, and English as a second language. The teachers I interviewed were all experienced, master teachers each with between 12 and 26 years of total teaching experience and holding between 2 and 25 years of experience at the pilot study school. Utilizing a criterion-based sampling strategy, I selected experienced teachers because I assumed they would be able to draw on more highs and lows throughout their teaching careers. I also based this selection on my assumption that experienced teachers would be more able to articulate influences that have shaped, changed, or strengthened their beliefs. I interviewed both Native American and Non-Native teachers representing kindergarten through fifth grade.

I conducted one interview with each teacher, lasting approximately 30 minutes to an hour. I utilized semi-structured interview questions, including the topics: confidence and pressures, feedback and relationships, inspiration, transitions, and crisis points. After the pilot study, I refined some of the questions and also added additional items to use for the present dissertation study. I audio recorded each interview, transcribed each verbatim, and coded the transcripts following the initial, axial, and theoretical coding levels. The end product was a conceptual model of how efficacy develops. Since the pilot study, I have further refined this conceptual model into one that integrated the main theories for the present study, namely social cognitive theory, the locus of control theory, and Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's integrated model of self-efficacy. Out of my pilot study findings emerged a cyclical pattern of doubt and efficacy renewal. I identified this as a conceptual doubt loop. Since the pilot study, I refined this conceptual model of beneficial doubt by integrating my findings with Wheatley's (2002) research on self-efficacy and doubt. Both of these refined conceptual models (self-efficacy development and a cycle of efficacy doubt) serve as the main conceptual groundwork for the present study. These models further informed much of the current study's literature review content, methodology, and instrumentation/protocols.

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness in the pilot study, I utilized respondent validation, triangulation, thick description, memoing, peer review, inter-reliability of coding, and reflexivity.

From the interviews, five themes emerged: 1) make a positive impact on students, 2) take full ownership of successes and failures, 3) trust myself, 4) perspective, and 5)

bounce back from doubt. The first theme included participants' descriptions of their passion for making a difference in the lives of students and the rewards of seeing those effects. The second theme explored participants' view of their role in taking sole responsibility for teaching success. The third theme explored how participants learn to trust themselves that they know what they are doing and can justify themselves. The fourth theme discussed how participants intentionally disengage from negativity and protect optimism. The fifth theme presented the process by which participants describe self-doubting and bouncing back through positive self-talk. To explain these themes, I primarily used direct quotes from participants.

I concluded the study with three key findings. The first was the discovery of a cycle of self-efficacy doubt. Specifically, I described it in the following way. When a new challenge emerged into the present or new context, this introduced doubts into the teacher's mind. Some teachers explained that they reached a crisis point of questioning whether they could be successful in the particular context or in teaching altogether. Findings indicated that participants then returned to utilize the cognitive processes of *positive impact*, *trust myself*, or *positive perspective* to bounce back from doubt. For *positive impact*, participants became aware of how they have made a positive impact or would remind themselves of their desire to make a positive impact. For *trust myself*, participants reminded themselves that they had what it took to be effective. For *perspective*, participants disengaged themselves from the negativity in the situation and intentionally protect an optimistic viewpoint (Zerbe, 2017).

The second key finding of the pilot study was the prominence of the theme *make*

a positive impact. This theme represented approximately twice the data compared to any other theme. This finding suggests that teachers' internal motivation to positively impact students is a dominant factor in self-efficacy development.

The third key finding of the pilot study was the overwhelming emphasis participants made on internal factors. Except for references to inspiration and support from others, participants exclusively described internal cognitive factors that shape and develop their self-efficacy. This finding was consistent even when I asked participants questions about external pressures. Participants responded by explaining that principal, colleague, and parent feedback did not affect them. This finding differs from both empirical and current research, which propose mainly external sources. The emerging findings of my research suggest that cognitive processes play an important role in teacher self-efficacy.

At that particular point in my research, I did not realize I would be changing school contexts myself as a teacher. However, I was curious as to whether the findings would be similar in a different school. Chapter 5 will refer back to these questions and will address any significant similarities or differences between the pilot study findings and present study findings. To accomplish this, I gained permission from participants to use their interview transcripts as part of my data for the current study. I used this information for two purposes. The first was to identify any significant differences that would highlight the significance of school context. The second purpose was to add confirmation to any similar findings between the two studies. From time to time in both

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I refer to key similarities and distinctions between findings from the pilot study and the present study.

This section concludes my detailed description of the pilot study, which I have referenced in multiple sections of this paper. The remainder of this methodology section focuses on the new school context for the present dissertation study.

Site, Sample Selection Methods, and Contextual Factors

Based on my intention to study the experiences of teachers in international contexts, the site of my study naturally took place in an international school. The physical setting was a private K-12 international school located in the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean Islands. The school was a medium to large international school, serving approximately 700 students. I also selected this site because it was the school in which I was teaching. This approach allowed me to conduct my research in the field with my participants. This closeness allowed me to connect to their experiences with my own similar experiences and gave me a context to understand their stories.

The participants were a criterion sample of certified teachers who were native to the United States and teaching at the context school. I based this selection on school data indicating that high teacher turnover was primarily among international American expatriate teachers, rather than the local Dominican teachers. Using purposeful selection, I chose a group of novice teachers, a group of teachers past the five-year mark, and a group of longevity teachers (10 or more years). I based these selections on my assumption that there would be significant differences in self-efficacy by experience, as

evidenced in research on self-efficacy for novice and experienced teachers (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007; Lev & Koslowsky, 2008).

One distal factor was an economic factor of high socioeconomic status for most of the students in the school, as evidenced by the family's ability to pay for a private school education. This dynamic often created an unequal power dynamic between parents and teachers, which could influence teacher confidence and stress. A proximal factor was a language element of most students entering school as English Language Learners (ELLs). This issue presented an extra instructional challenge for teachers and a language barrier between teachers and families. A second proximal factor was a cultural element of most teachers representing United States culture and ideology, while most families and students represent Dominican culture and ideology. This factor presented a challenge of culturally responsive pedagogy for teachers, particularly regarding classroom management and student engagement strategies. Likely the most relevant proximal factor to this study was the high turnover rate of North American teachers. As stated in Chapter 1, the length of stay for expatriate teachers in the context international school has averaged 4.16 years over the past five years. The average length of stay among younger teachers is closer to three years. Most novice teachers fulfill two or three-year contracts and return to the United States to teach.

Timeline

This phenomenological study was conducted over one school year. Focus groups and interviews were conducted in the fall of 2017. Member checking and follow-up conversations with participants continued into the spring. In drafting chapters 4 and 5, I shared writing samples with participants for the purposes of 1) member checking accurate representation of their stories and 2) confirming with participants that inclusion of direct quotes and specific information provided an appropriate level of confidentiality. The final steps included sharing significant findings with the participants, administrators of the school, and final publication.

Characteristics of Participants and Participant Recruitment

Upon IRB approval, I began selection of my participants. The recommended sample size for phenomenological studies is between five and 25 people (Creswell, 2007). This is based on the research intention to select participants who can create a deep understanding of the phenomena, instead of focusing of the number of participants. The participants in this study were purposefully selected, including teachers representing a range of experience levels, grade levels, subject areas, ages, and experience teaching in different school contexts. The inclusion of teachers with prior experience in schools in the United States proved to be particularly helpful in understanding the significance of school context, as well as common efficacy themes spanning across contexts.

Survey and Focus Group Recruitment

I initially approached 15 prospective participants to complete a survey and join a focus group session. I explained the intentions of my research study, confidentiality protocols, and focus group topics. I also provided information on the date and time for the focus group, approximate time commitment, and how many additional teachers would be in the focus group. I provided them with the consent form and teacher self-efficacy survey. I asked them to sign the consent form and complete the survey and bring it to the focus group. Of the 15 teachers I approached, 12 teachers indicated their willingness to participate. Therefore, participation for the survey and focus groups included approximately 12 male and female certified teachers between the ages of 21 and 60.

Individual Interview Selection

Following three focus group sessions, I purposefully selected two or three teachers from each focus group for individual interviews. My intention was to represent a few new teachers, a few teachers past the five-year mark, and a few experienced teachers. I scored participant's self-efficacy surveys and selected participants who had higher efficacy perceptions. I also considered participants who were able to articulate factors contributing to their self-efficacy during focus group discussions. I approached these teachers individually following the focus group sessions and asked them if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. I presented them with the semi-structured interview questions and once again explained confidentiality protocols. All of the teachers immediately agreed. We jointly negotiated a day and time the following week that would be convenient for them. Therefore, eight teachers in total participated in one-

on-one interviews. The data from all eight interviews is included in the composite themes.

Case Study Profiles

From these eight interviews, I selected three individuals as case study profiles. The case study profiles tell the in-depth stories of self-efficacy transformation for one novice teacher, one teacher with over 10 years of experience, and one veteran teacher of 16 years. These three individuals were selected as case study profiles because of their markedly high self-efficacy. They were able to talk through how they reached the other side of doubt, transitions, and crisis points. The demographics of all participants are summarized below.

Table 1. Participants' Demographics.

Participant Pseudonym & Demographics	Years of experience (total)	Focus Group	Individual Interview	Teaching Area
Reese Female, Age 21-25	First year	Focus Group 1	Yes	Middle School Math
* <i>Allegra</i> Female, Age 21-25	First year	Focus Group 1	Yes	Middle School Multiple
Rita Female, Age 21-25	First year	Focus Group 1	No	Middle School Math
Dee Female, Age 21-25	2	Focus Group 2	No	Elementary

Table 1 Continued.

Kayla Female, Age 25-30	4	Focus Group 2	No	Elementary - Multiple
Mary Female, Age over 30	8	Focus Group 2	Yes	High School English
Misty Female, Age over 40	9	Focus Group 3	Yes	Elementary - Multiple
Kim Female, Age over 40	11	Focus Group 3	No	Elementary
* <i>Sunny</i> Female, Age over 30	11	Focus Group 3	Yes	Middle School, Prior Elementary
Jane Female, Age over 30	13	Focus Group 2	Yes	Elementary
* <i>Cheryl</i> Female, Age over 40	16	Focus Group 3	Yes	High School English
George Male, Age over 60	41	Focus Group 3	Yes	High School Science, Math

*Denotes participant as a case study profile.

The following offers a brief introduction to each of the 12 teachers who participated in focus groups and interviews for this study.

Reese is a 22-year-old mathematics teacher who teaches 7th and 8th grade general math and 3rd and 4th grade math enrichment classes. She is a first year teacher who did her student teaching in the same school where she now teaches. She has a Bachelor's degree in Math, Spanish, and Secondary Education. Reese exudes a contagious passion for life in general and in particular for her teaching content. It is a delight to watch Reese in her classroom element as she engages students in a pursuit to fall in love with math. Reese describes herself as a reflective thinker who enjoys thinking out-loud. It was this reflective practice that illuminated her growth mindset. Reese believes that she can grow and accomplish anything in life if she works at it, including being a confident and

effective first year teacher. She aspires to teach her students to embrace this mindset as well. This inspirational first year teacher believes that good teachers have an ability to relate to students both academically and relationally.

Allegra is a fresh college graduate who also did her student teaching in the same school as her first teaching assignment. She is a young teacher who teaches all content areas in a self-contained 5th grade classroom, which is also part of the Middle School. Allegra has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a concentration in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL). In her classroom, Allegra displays enthusiasm, creativity, and her own genuine love for learning. Describing herself as a curious and avid learner, she delights simply in acquiring new skills and knowledge on their own merit. Allegra stated that she believes good teaching flows out of building relationships with students in which they feel safe, appreciated, and respected.

Rita is a young college graduate in her first year of teaching. Rita has a calm, relaxed, go with the flow demeanor. She followed in her mother's footsteps to become a teacher. Rita teaches middle school math and language arts and has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. A walk into Rita's classroom will find engaging, interactive group work to facilitate practicing new skills in a fun way. She enjoys interacting with her students through humor and joking. She can also be found studiously preparing lessons off the clock with the intention to "figure out what she's doing" as a first-year teacher.

Dee is a young teacher in her second year as a Kindergarten teacher. She has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and did her student teaching at the same school where she now teaches. Dee exhibits a true enthusiasm and passion for teaching.

She actively seeks out professional development on classroom management and shares her learning by serving as a trainer/coach for new teachers. Dee's teaching is based on relationship/community building with her students and her belief that all children can learn. This confident, young teacher is an inspiration to all those around her.

Kayla has taught 4 years in a variety of positions. She has taught as a full-time substitute, a resource teacher, a second-grade teacher, and currently as a school librarian. She has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a master's in teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL). This energetic teacher expresses her delight in the opportunity she has to integrate ELL strategies with library skills instruction. She particularly enjoys that her job position provides a combination of teaching responsibilities and organization/ administrative tasks. Kayla has a passion for cultivating a love for books in children and inspiring literacy rich families.

Mary has taught for 8 years at the same school and has consistently taught High School English the entire time. She has a bachelor's degree in English and Secondary Education and a Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction. A walk into Mary's classroom will find students actively engaged in dialog about literature. Her use of interactive strategies involves all students while also ensuring that student talking is focused on the literature topic at hand. Mary is vision minded, embracing the school vision as her own teaching mission, namely to shape the lives of students. Her mindset of what makes a good teacher has shifted some since her first-year teaching. She described how she began teaching with a passion and love for the content of literature. Now, she

explains that a love for students first and foremost makes a strong teacher. A passion for the teaching content now comes secondary to relationships with those she teaches.

Misty taught for 9 years in the states before recently moving to the Dominican Republic with her family. Misty taught a variety of grade levels as both a classroom teacher and a specials/intervention teacher in three prior schools in the States. Although her degree is in Elementary Education, Misty teaches as a full-time substitute, often switching between Pre-K and High School within a given school day. She is an informal mentor to many first-year teachers by providing encouragement, practical guidance, and social get-togethers at her home. She walks around with a contagious smile and encourages every colleague with whom she crosses paths. Misty believes a good teacher genuinely loves kids and makes sure he/she is adequately prepared for teaching.

Kim is in her twelfth-year teaching and has a bachelor's degree in Child Development. She has taught a variety of grade levels and also taught in stateside schools prior to her current school. Kim exudes a calm, composed, unfettered demeanor as she teaches a group of energetic second grade students. Describing herself as a stubborn person, Kim has a resolve to keep going and stick things out even when teaching is difficult. She advises new teachers to remain consistent even when initial enthusiasm crashes with reality. She also encourages new teachers to look for the positive things in each day and reflect on those positive moments.

Sunny has taught for 11 years, with 9 of those years teaching at her present school and two years at a school in the States. She has experience working with students from 3rd grade through 8th grade and currently works with Middle School students. Sunny has

a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction. Sunny describes herself as an informal mentor to new teachers. Her encouraging insight and practical teaching assistance has made her a favorite among colleagues. She enjoys modeling instruction and classroom management for young teachers by stepping into their classrooms and teaching alongside them. Sunny believes good teachers have good classroom management and are driven by a passion for teaching.

Jane is in her thirteenth year of teaching, having taught in three prior schools in the States. She has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and currently teaches elementary students. Jane sparkles with positive energy, creativity, and genuine delight for teaching. A peak into Jane's classroom may at times find students quietly and studiously working at their desks or may find students listening attentively on the edge of their seats to a read aloud or may find students sitting in a circle joyfully participating in a classroom community building game. Jane's clear and consistent expectations and instruction have set her apart as a go-to mentor for young teachers. Her obvious love for her students and for teaching has made her a student and parent favorite in multiple schools over the years. Jane believes a good teacher has a genuine care and concern for students as whole individuals.

Cheryl is an experienced teacher of 16 years. Holding a bachelor's degree in Literature and a master's in teaching, Cheryl is in her element teaching High School English. This is the third school she has taught in, having also taught five years in a school in the states and three years in local private school. Cheryl describes herself as a

teacher who truly enjoys the energy, interaction, and learning process in the classroom. She simply loves teaching! Cheryl believes a good teacher is knowledgeable in their content and can express that knowledge clearly. Cheryl further explained that good teaching is much more than just the content and that good teachers also make sure students know how much the teacher cares about them.

George is a veteran teacher of 41 years and has taught close to 30 years in his current school. George holds multiple bachelor's degrees in Chemistry, Biology and Math and a Master's in Education. George has teaching experience with essentially all areas of high school science and math, as well as theatre arts and computer classes. His wealth of experience has gained him the deference of high school students who normally challenge boundaries with new teachers. Describing his classroom as a delightful place to "play" with learning and years of looking forward to Mondays, it's hard to miss that George truly enjoys teaching. George believes a good teacher needs a genuine desire to teach, a well-crafted skill set, and an environment conducive to learning.

Although all of the participants took part in focus groups and completed a self-efficacy self-assessment, only eight participants went on to share their personal self-efficacy stories during in-depth interviews. Following phenomenological research guidelines, my intention was to focus more on depth with a few participants instead of a particular quantity of participants. Initially, I intended to limit in-depth interviews to between 3 and 6 individuals. However, focus groups revealed that many participants were able to speak to self-efficacy development in great depth. I decided to conduct a few extra interviews to add robustness to the data set.

Data Collection Strategies

The heart of data collection for this study was questions. There was an intentionality regarding general categories of questions, framing of the questions, and creating space for new questions to emerge in the midst of collection and analysis. Data collection in phenomenological research focuses on two types of general questions, “What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?” and “What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?” (Creswell, 2013, p. 2). These are the broad categories that overarch the specific research questions for this study, “How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?” “How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe how they develop self-efficacy?” and “How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?” From these research questions, I developed a range of open-ended questions that specifically target aspects of self-efficacy. These are the questions I used for individual interview questions. A table of specifications (see appendices) delineates the relationship between the overarching questions and the specific interview questions. As the data collection process unfolded, I ended up asking additional questions, not previously listed on the interview protocol. These questions served to further illuminate specific experiences, contexts and situations; thereby still falling under the broad overarching questions for phenomenological research.

The types of data that I collected for this study included an individual teacher self-efficacy survey, focus groups, and individual teacher interviews. By collecting data through different methods, I triangulated the data. Triangulation of data in phenomenological research refers to the use of multiple sources of data collection to achieve a deeper understanding of the phenomena (Bogdan & Biklen, 2004). Triangulation serves as a check for each method of data to verify whether all methods consistently indicate the same final conclusions. The primary source of knowledge in phenomenological research is the perceptions of the participants, which is the rationale for focus groups and interviews with teachers. The following describes the collection protocols for each type of data.

Self-Efficacy Survey

This study used Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES), also referred to as the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale. The survey identified the self-efficacy level of individual teachers. The survey also served to open up the conversation about self-efficacy for subsequent focus group discussions. The survey also helped to identify any particularly interesting or strong responses from the 12 participants. This data further informed my interview protocols for the focus groups and the individual interviews.

The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale is considered a reliable and valid instrument (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The developers have consistently found three moderately correlated factors, including Teacher Self-Efficacy in Student Engagement, Teacher Self-Efficacy in Instructional Practices, and Teacher Self-Efficacy

in Classroom Management. The survey has the participant rate the degree to which they (1) strongly disagree and (9) strongly agree with belief statements about their students' learning and their teaching competence. There are two versions, a full 24-item scale and a short form with 12 items. The reliability for the scale ranks from moderate to highly reliable for both the short and long forms (see table below). The authors recommend that full 24-item scale (or 12-item short form) be used with pre-service teachers, explaining that the factor structure often is less distinct for these respondents.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Information for the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

	Long Form			Short Form		
	Mean	SD	Alpha	Mean	SD	Alpha
Overall	7.1	.94	.94	7.1	.98	.90
Engagement	7.3	1.1	.87	7.2	1.2	.81
Instruction	7.3	1.1	.91	7.3	1.2	.86
Management	6.7	1.1	.90	6.7	1.2	.86

I attached a participant consent form and relevant demographic questions to the survey. The consent form explained that the surveys were confidential, though not anonymous to the researcher. The demographic questions included total years of teaching experience, years at current school, and participant age. I used the years of experience to place participants into focus groups. I also included age since research on the turnover in international schools indicates that age is a significant factor (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009; Mancuso & White, 2010).

To administer the survey, I approached participants individually and asked them to participate voluntarily by completing the survey. I invited participants to bring their

questions and comments about the survey to a focus group discussion. I asked participants to return a copy of their completed survey and completed consent form to me before the focus group session. The survey was in a paper-pencil format. To respect my participants' valuable time, I utilized the short form (12-items). I hand scored each survey according to the survey developer's scoring guide. I used the information from the surveys for two purposes: (1) to guide the focus group discussion questions and (2) to identify the self-efficacy level of individual teachers for subsequent analysis during/after individual teacher interviews.

Focus Groups

Selection Criteria. I placed the teachers into focus groups based on sampling criteria. The basis for the four different focus groups were years of experience. This criterion included: (1) first year teachers (novice), (2) teachers with more than 5 years (total teaching experience) and (3) longevity teachers with more than 10 years (total teaching experience). There were some adjustments to this criterion based on participant availability. For example, three teachers joined different focus groups due to their scheduling availability. I took this into consideration when I memoed, coded, and presented the themes for the focus groups.

Introductory and Confidentiality Protocols. To begin each focus group session, I started with a brief introduction of the purpose of the focus group, which was to understand teachers' thinking processes about their self-efficacy beliefs. I then explained confidentiality and anonymity guidelines and limitations. I clarified that participants must

respect that everything shared in the session stayed there and was not to be shared outside of the session. I also asked permission of the group to audio record the entire session. Any names dropped were deleted from the transcript. The protocols for discussion are described below.

Think Aloud Methodology. The question and discussion protocol consisted of a think aloud methodology utilizing the initial teacher self-efficacy survey questions.

Coladarci (1992) describes the value of this strategy as a follow-up for surveys, stating:

From a measurement perspective, the teacher efficacy literature also would be enriched by more qualitative studies, such as those employing a think aloud methodology, in which teachers' thoughts are probed as they respond to teacher efficacy items. Think-aloud studies would throw needed light on the kinds of factors, considerations, standards, and so forth, that teachers invoke as they respond, say, to survey items. (p. 335)

For the discussion, I took the role of facilitator. I read one of the 12 survey items and then asked the group to explain their thinking as they answered the item. I used questioning strategies to dig deeper into participants' thinking by asking "Why?", "Can you explain your thinking?", or "Do you have an example?".

Round Table Protocol. To provide an equal voice to all participants and to avoid a few individuals dominating the conversation (Alreck & Settle, 2004), I established a round table protocol. In this protocol, each participant was given an opportunity to respond to each question. I followed this protocol for the items of particular interest based on how participants scored the efficacy scale. Therefore, it was not necessary to discuss all the items from the survey. I also included a degree of flexibility (Alreck &

Settle, 2004) as the facilitator. For example, I often interjected and prompted a participant to clarify, explain their thinking, or provide an example.

Individual Interviews

Selection Criteria. From the focus group sessions, I asked some of the participants for an individual interview. I selected participants for this phase based on participants' ability and willingness to articulate their personal experiences, beliefs and perceptions in the focus group sessions. I conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with 8 teachers from the focus groups.

Interview Instrument. The individual interview consisted of a semi-structured interview protocol (see appendix). This protocol had a list of questions that were intended to dig deeply into the cognitive processes of self-efficacy development. The protocol included the topics: general questions, confidence, inspiration, pressure and stressors, relationships, changes and transitions, and crisis points. To ensure credibility of the interview instrument in this study, I had the questions peer reviewed and tested in a mock interview. At that point, some questions were eliminated due to repetition and some questions were edited for better clarity. The revised instrument was further utilized in a pilot study with teachers. The interviews produced a substantial amount of data that provided a rich description, thereby adding credibility to the instrument. Some new directions for the current study prompted the addition of new questions. The individual interview also created a safer space for participants to share stories that they were uncomfortable to share in the focus group sessions.

Engagement Strategies. To encourage participation, I provided teachers with the protocol questions before the interview and asked them to choose the questions they felt most comfortable sharing about. I believe this choice strategy enhanced trust, vulnerability, and authenticity by encouraging participants to respond freely without feeling forced to respond to all questions. A second strategy to encourage participation was clear communication that my purpose was to simply learn from the participants, without any judgment or criticism (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003). A further strategy was to communicate the research safeguards, particularly confidentiality and anonymity (Bodgan & Biklen, 2003). I specifically noted that no information would be reported to administration using their names. I also specified that all data would be kept locked up or under password entry. In regard to audio recording, I explained that this was necessary to best represent exactly what participants said. Only one individual declined audio recording. This participant preferred that I simply took notes during the interview. The interviews took place in participants' classrooms at a time that was convenient for them. Each participant took part in interviews lasting up to an hour in duration.

Data Analysis Strategies

Data analysis is interconnected with data collection and final descriptions. Therefore, the process of analyzing the data occurred simultaneously with data collection. Furthermore, ongoing analysis of data influenced sources of data. This characteristic of qualitative research is described as a backwards design approach in which preliminary data informs ongoing data collection. For example, during interviews I ended up asking

new questions based on participant's descriptions of their perceptions. Dialog with participants often took surprising twists and turns, which informed new questions for follow-up interviews. I also altered selection of participants for in-depth interviews based on data that emerged from initial focus group discussions. Essentially, I interviewed more participants than originally planned because each individual story initially appeared particularly unique and I needed to confirm common themes among all participants.

Data analysis in phenomenological research follows a systematic process that includes 1) reduction of data into significant statements (horizontalization), 2) creating broad themes (clusters of meaning) and 3) a culminating narrative that summarizes "what" the participants have experienced and "how" they have experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). Relevant strategies to analyze the data for this study included bracketing, memoing, horizontalization, clusters of meaning, textural description, structural description, and essential structure. These strategies are described below.

Bracketing

Bracketing or "epoche" is a strategy in phenomenological research whereby the researcher attempts to suspend previous notions, biases and judgments (Moustakas, 1994). The purpose of bracketing is to extract the genuine perceptions and experiences of the participants in their purest form, with minimal tainting from the researcher's perspective. I bracketed my own preconceived ideas through self-reflection and awareness of my own preconceived ideas. I also committed to this process by practicing focus, mindfulness, and presence with whatever the participant said and wherever the participant led the discussion. I remember vividly one interview with a participant who

described an experience and then asked, “I’m not sure that answers the question, but does what I said make sense?” In fact, I honestly had to respond that yes, the participant had answered the question perfectly. The participant’s response, though, was entirely different than I had envisioned with the question. By remaining present with the participant’s self-description, I was able to move into the way the participant thought about the essence of their experience with self-efficacy instead of how I had framed the question and the type of response I had expected.

Memoing

Memos are “short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur to the reader” (Creswell, 2013). Memoing helps the researcher to get a sense of the whole database. I utilized this strategy by writing memo notes before, during, and after focus groups and interviews. These memos included a combination of exact language and key ideas or concepts that were common among participants. Memoing assisted me in grouping common ideas into clusters, which further assisted me in reducing data into essential understandings.

Memoing also benefited the data analysis process by noting areas I needed to further investigate or additional questions I needed to ask. In one instance, I was memoing after a focus group with new teachers and a new question emerged as to whether the new teacher perceptions were based on their characteristic as new teachers or whether it was due to the induction process/characteristics of the school. This led me to select an additional interview participant who had previously taught but was freshly new to the school. This question that developed out of memoing led me to also focus on

teaching transition experiences with all participants who had taught at various schools. I asked participants about their first-year experiences if it had been at a different school.

Memoing is a beneficial step before horizontalization (reduction). To prepare for reduction/coding, I listened to audio interviews and read over transcriptions in their entirety multiple times. The purpose of this was to gain a holistic bird's eye view of the data. I then memoed, or recorded notes, in the margin of the transcripts. These memos included key, common, or contradictory ideas and concepts.

Horizontalization

Horizontalization is a reduction process that examines interview transcriptions and highlights statements that are particularly significant to answering the research questions. This step endeavors to give each significant statement equal value. I accomplished this by utilizing two physical visualization strategies. First, I printed out transcripts, took colored highlighters and highlighted each significant statement, sentence, or quote that added insight and understanding pertaining to the research questions. Secondly, I cut out each highlighted statement as a strip of paper. These statements served as "in vivo" codes, or exact words used by participants (Creswell, 2013). In vivo codes were my primary form of codes. This type of coding was essential to my research as I intend to preserve participants' voices and represent their meanings as accurately as possible.

Clusters of Meaning

Clusters of Meaning is the process of combining the individual statements into themes or meaning groups. The criteria for the clusters was that they (1) exhaustively represented all the data, (2) did not overlap, and (3) were meaningful (Creswell, 2013). Using the cutout strips of highlighted statements, I removed overlapping or repetitive statements. I then grouped the statements into categories based on naturally occurring relevancy between them.

Textural and Structural Descriptions

The clusters of statements are used to write a narrative description of what participants experienced (textural) and how the participants experienced it in terms of context and particular situations (structural) (Moustakas, 1994). The structural description is also termed as imaginative variation, which includes a “description of the context or setting that influenced how participants experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 82).

Following this narrative, Moustakas (1994) suggests that researchers write out personal statements of their own experience and the context, and situations that have influenced their experiences. I chose to include this bracketing earlier in the methods section when I described my positionality, or role as a researcher (Creswell, 2013). This positionality segment served as an introduction to my personal rationale for undertaking this particular phenomenon. In the segment, I described the personal experiences and context that led me to investigate teacher self-efficacy development.

Essential Structure, “The Essence”

A culminating synthesis of the textural and structural descriptions was intended to create a deep understanding of self-efficacy as experienced by a small number of participants. In this final description, I focused on the common experiences of participants, operating with the assumption that the phenomenon had an underlying structure. This essential structure, or “essence” aims to guide the reader to more profoundly understand what it is like for a teacher to develop self-efficacy (Creswell, 2013). This essence is also an interpretation created by researcher insight and connection back to the existing body of efficacy research. Represented by vivid examples, the end product of the study describes the essence of self-efficacy development as experienced by teachers in an international school in the Dominican Republic.

Ethical Considerations

IRB approval

IRB applications were submitted and approved by both the Montana State University Institutional Review Board and the participating school before any data was collected. School approval consisted of written consent from the school director and three school principals.

Informed Consent

Upon this approval, individual teachers were asked to participate and to sign a written consent form. The written consent form clearly stated the research goals, explained how the data would be used, explained confidentiality and anonymity, and that

participants could withdraw at any point. The consent form included information about time commitments and descriptions of participation venues, including the survey, focus groups, and individual interviews.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality considers the protection of participants' identity, as well as the location of the study. For the purposes of this study, the specific school name was left out; however, the location and school characteristics were included. This information is valuable for transferability to other similar international schools. For confidentiality, I assigned participants a pseudonym in place of their real name. With verbal permission to audio record sessions, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. In this process, any information that might identify participants personally (including names) was removed from the transcription. If any information the participant shared was identifiable, this information was not included in the research. Only the interviewer had access to written surveys, audio recordings from focus groups and individual interviews, memo notes, and coding papers. All data was kept locked up or under password entry. The recordings will be deleted one year after the dissertation has been completed.

Trust and Reciprocity

One ethical concern in research that is of utmost importance to me as a researcher is reciprocity. Reciprocity is "giving back to participants for their time and efforts in our projects" (Creswell, 2013, p. 55). Participants should not feel that they are being used solely for the research purposes. Considering how participants may benefit from the

study can provide reciprocity. Although, there was no monetary or other pay back compensation given, there were some meaningful ways I gave back to the participants. One way was to share a summary of relevant findings from the study with participants. This may benefit their self-efficacy. Another way was to share a summary of school leadership implications with the school administrators. This may benefit administrative focus to strengthen the self-efficacy of all the teachers.

Trustworthiness

There are multiple suggested criteria for establishing the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study. This study addressd Lincoln and Guba's (1985) naturalistic, alternative terms of credibility, confirmability, and transferability. I chose to not include dependability, but rather to address reliability strategies for my coding. I also described examples of reflexivity. This clarified my awareness of my own biases, assumptions, and past experiences. I also explained provisions I made to either integrate or separate my experiences from participants' responses.

Credibility (Internal Validity)

Credibility provides assurance that the researcher's interpretation accurately mirrors the participants' perspectives and intentions. The most critically acclaimed method to establish credibility is respondent validation (or member checking) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To accomplish this, I used member checking to clarify my understanding of participants' statements during the interviews. Specifically, I echoed back to participants what I thought they said and allowed them to agree, disagree or expand. To most

accurately represent and honor the intended perspectives of the participants, most of my codes and themes used exact language (in vivo coding) taken from transcriptions.

Another valuable method for providing credibility is triangulation. I triangulated the data by making use of multiple sources of data as supporting evidence to confirm my findings (Creswell, 2013). Sources included a teacher self-efficacy survey instrument, focus groups, individual interviews, and memoing.

Reliability

Reliability refers to stability and agreement of codes and themes across multiple coders. The most important method in this regard is intercoder reliability (or intercoder agreement). To provide stability of coding, I had a qualitative coder check my codes and themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I further addressed reliability through memoing. This technique added consistency to the coding process by “tying together different pieces of data into a recognizable cluster, often to show that those data are instances of a general concept” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 73). In this way, memoing served as an internal audit of my codes and themes. I used memo notes during and after interviews, and throughout the analysis process.

Confirmability (Objectivity)

Confirmability refers to establishing the data and interpretation as appropriately matching reality. Essentially, confirmability safeguards the interpretation from being fabricated or conjured up by the researcher without a solid base of practical, real evidence

to support it. Strategies to provide confirmability in this study included triangulation, respondent verification, and intercoder reliability.

Transferability (Generalizability)

The data from this research is applicable to other teachers within the particular school. Results and implications are also transferable to other international schools with similar school characteristics. Beyond these guidelines, readers may make their own judgments of how the findings may apply to other contexts. One salient way to enable readers to make their own decisions regarding transferability is through rich, thick description (Creswell, 2013). I provided a “thick description” with direct teacher quotes and detailed descriptions of participants’ individual stories. This detailed description of participants, their stories, and themes will allow readers to transfer information to other settings based on shared characteristics (Creswell, 2013).

Reflexivity

Throughout the entire research process, I practiced reflexivity. This accepts that my analysis was subjective, and my own biases were represented in my interpretation of the data. My reflexivity was especially important in the interview conversations. For example, my past teaching experiences allowed me to connect with my participants’ stories. To separate out my biases and assumptions, I asked questions to dig deeper into the participant’s cognitive processes. Also, I anticipated participants would express thoughts and ideas that were not part of my current understanding. In order to integrate their understandings with my interpretation, I often asked for clarification.

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this phenomenological study, the data came through participants' voices, stories and lived experiences. Qualitative measures in the form of focus groups and interviews were used to depict participants' perceptions about the factors and processes that shaped their self-efficacy. A quantitative measure in the form of a teacher self-efficacy survey was used to identify self-efficacy levels and triangulate the data. The study specifically focused on participants' cognitive processes as they encountered pressures, challenges, changes, and self-doubt. Conversations with participants were attentive to particular factors that teachers perceived to influence their persistence in the profession in general, as well as in a specific school site.

The method of data collection included several steps. First, a teacher self-efficacy survey generated data on teachers' self-efficacy levels and assisted in the selection of questions for each focus group. The survey also enabled teachers to "pre-think" about their self-efficacy prior to the focus group in an effort to stimulate articulation of their thinking. In conjunction with the survey, focus groups asked participants to describe their thinking as they answered questions from the survey. This think-aloud method targeted participants' perceptions and cognitive processes regarding three survey categories: classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement. The focus groups brought to light common themes among all participants as teachers compared their similar perceptions. Focus groups also depicted individual differences as teachers shared unique perceptions that contrasted with other participants in the group. Following

the focus groups, I selected eight individuals for in-depth interviews. Individual interviews served to unveil the perceptions of teachers regarding their underlying beliefs, confidence, stressors, challenges, inspiration, interpersonal dimensions, changes and transitions, and crisis points. Additionally, throughout the entire research process, I had informal conversations with participants and other colleagues regarding their self-efficacy perceptions, which were also included in the data.

Figure 14. Research Process Steps.

Step 1: Self-Efficacy Survey	Step 2: Focus Groups	Step 3: Interviews
1. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?	1. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?	1. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?
	2. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe how they develop self-efficacy?	2. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe how they develop self-efficacy?
	3. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?	3. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?

Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey Results

As a method to enrich the data collected through focus groups and interviews, and to add triangulation, participants completed the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This quantitative piece allowed for a broad, comparative analysis of individual teacher's perceptions, specifically regarding total years of experience and experience at the context school. This instrument was obtained with permission from Anita Woolfolk-Hoy, Ph.D and the Ohio State University. The scale is based on Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) integrated model of teacher efficacy that includes Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) and locus of control theory (Rotter, 1966). Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) state that the questionnaire "is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities" (survey page). A score of 1 indicates teachers can do "nothing". A score of 3 indicates teachers can do "very little". A score of 5 indicates "some influence". A score of 7 indicates teachers can do "quite a bit". A score of 9 indicates teachers can do "a great deal".

Table 3. Meanings of Self-efficacy Survey Scores.

Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a Bit		A Great Deal
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Analysis of the survey results revealed the following findings. The average self-efficacy score among the 12 participants was 6.64, which is slightly lower than the

standard reliability mean of 7.1 (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). This score corresponds to the self-efficacy belief that participants have “quite a bit” of influence on their students. The average score for the questions pertaining to the category of Student Engagement was 6.24, which is lower than the reliability mean of 7.2 and indicates a belief in-between “some influence” and “quite a bit”. The average for the questions pertaining to the category of Instructional Strategies was 6.79, slightly lower than the reliability mean of 7.3 and indicating a belief that teachers have “quite a bit” of influence. The average for the questions pertaining to the category of Classroom Management was 6.95, which is slightly higher than the reliability mean of 6.7 and indicates that teachers believe they have “quite of bit” of influence. Therefore, these ratings demonstrate that on average, the participants in this study have teacher self-efficacy levels indicating they believe they have “quite a bit” of influence on their students.

Table 4. Comparison of Self-Efficacy Averages of Participants to Reliability Means.

	Participant Average	Standard Reliability Mean (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).
Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Total Score	6.64	7.1
Student Engagement	6.24	7.2
Instructional Strategies	6.79	7.3
Classroom Management	6.95	6.7

Among novice teachers, the average efficacy score was 5.66. This indicates that these teachers believe they have “some influence.” Teachers with less than 5 years total

experience (not including novice teachers) had an average of 6.03, with one teacher scoring 7.25. This indicates that these teachers believe they have more than “some influence” but less than “quite a bit” of influence. Teachers with between 5 and 10 years total experience had an average of 6.65, with one teacher scoring 7.3. This score was lower than, but close to an indication of “quite a bit” of influence. Teachers with over 10 years total experience had an average of 7.41, with one teacher scoring 8.1. These scores correspond to the belief that teachers have at least “quite a bit” of influence. These averages suggest a positive trend of higher efficacy scores based on total years of teaching experience. These results also show that each experience bracket had positive outlier scores, suggesting that some teachers may have higher self-efficacy regardless of their experience level.

Another key finding had to do with efficacy scores and years of experience at the context school. An experienced teacher who was new to the school had a score of 6, which was similar to the efficacy scores of novice teachers. Teachers with less than 5 years of experience at the school site had an average self-efficacy score of 6.09. Teachers with more than 5 years of experience at the school site scored 7.61 on average. Teachers with more than 10 years at the school site scored 7.53. These results suggest a positive trend of higher self-efficacy scores based on years of experience at the school site and a possible leveling out of score growth at some point.

Of some interest was the fact that three of the participants completed their student teaching at the same school prior to their first-year teaching. There was no marked difference between the self-efficacy of first year teachers who had student taught at the

current site and those who did not. There was, however, a fascinating finding with a teacher in her second year who had student taught at the same school. This teacher had a significantly higher self-efficacy score that was more similar to teachers with over 5 or 10 years of experience at the school. This finding will be addressed in more depth later.

Table 5. Self-efficacy Survey Results.

Demographics	Student Engagement	Instructional Strategies	Classroom Management	Self-Efficacy Score (total) 1=low, 9=high
Reese Female, Age 21-25, First year	6	6.25	4.25	5.5
Allegra Female, Age 21-25, First year	5	6	6.75	5.91
Rita Female, Age 21-25, First year	5.75	5.25	5.75	5.58
Dee Female, Age 21-25, 2 years (total & at school site)	7.25	6.75	7.75	7.25
Kayla Female, Age 25-30, 4 years (total & at school site)	5	6.3	6.5	5.9
Mary Female, Age over 30, 8 years (total & at school site)	6.5	7.5	8	7.3
Misty Female, Age over 40, 9 years (total), 1 st year at school site	5.25	6.25	6.5	6
Kim Female, Age over 40, 11 years (total), 3 rd year at school site	6.75	6.75	6.25	6.5

Table 5 Continued.

Sunny Female, Age over 30, 11 years (total), 9 years at school site	7.5	8	7.75	7.75
Jane Female, Age over 30, 13 years (total), 4 th year at school site	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Cheryl Female, Age over 40, 16 years (total), 9 years at school site	8.2	8.2	8	8.1
George Male, Age over 60, 41 years (total), 28 years at school site	5.5	7.5	9	7.3

Focus Group Results

In order to attend to each research question, the data was transcribed, coded, clustered, and described in three categories: Efficacy Sources, Self-Efficacy Development and Cognitive Processes. The themes for each of the three categories are elaborated below and portrayed through participants' own words.

Focus group one, novice teachers, described the factors that shape their self-efficacy in terms of challenges and sources that raise their confidence. Participants described three external challenges, namely: limitations, classroom management, and isolation. Novice teachers disclosed feeling overwhelmed, feeling powerless, and experiencing day-to-day survival thinking. Novice teachers described using multiple cognitive processes, including: reflection, growth mindset, and cognitive flexibility.

Significant self-efficacy boosters included knowing their content, mastery experiences, and social persuasion.

The second focus group, including teachers with mid-range experience, disclosed three internal lenses that shape their beliefs in their ability to be successful. These included how they viewed students, how they thought about classroom management, and their perception of administrators' intentions. These teachers identified trust relationships with principals/mentor teachers as a significant factor in building their self-efficacy. These teachers spoke about developing self-efficacy through perspective enlightenment, behavior change and intentional practice. The primary cognitive process they utilized to experience a perspective change was self-reflection/self-critiquing.

Focus group three, comprised of longevity teachers, spoke about their challenges in terms of learning curves with ESL students and trust relationships with administrators. These experienced teachers identified *Intentional Practice* as the main way that they developed their personal teaching efficacy. When encountering significant teaching challenges or learning curves, these teachers described multiple cognitive processes they use to renew and strengthen their self-efficacy, including remembering prior success, intentional positivity, and reconsidering calling/commitment. A significant finding that emerged from the veteran teachers was a *Self-Efficacy Growth Cycle*, which involved a cyclical process of 1) encountering new challenges, 2) feeling dissonance, 3) experiencing a perspective shift, 4) changing teacher approaches, 5) institutionalizing change through intentional practice, and ultimately 6) self-efficacy growth. This cycle

was not overtly apparent in the first two focus groups but did appear again clearly in interviews with individuals.

The follow-up individual interviews revealed some overlap of themes among the focus groups, depending on individual teachers. As a disclosure, these themes represent the focus groups in general terms. Not all themes perfectly characterize all individuals in each focus group. To accomplish this, more individualized narratives will follow the focus group summaries.

Focus Group One: First Year Teachers

This focus group included three teachers, all in their first year of teaching. Based on their current teaching experience, as well as prior student teaching experiences, this focus group of new teachers shared their perceptions of the factors that built their self-efficacy, as well as significant pressures and challenges that triggered self-doubt. Participants identified the main challenges to their self-efficacy to include: limitations, classroom management, and isolation. Participants described experiencing these teaching challenges by feeling overwhelmed, feeling powerless, and operating in survival mode. Participants disclosed the thinking processes that enabled them to keep trying, namely: reflection, a growth mindset, and cognitive flexibility. Trial and error practice emerged as the prominent strategy teachers utilized to make changes. Participants identified the factors that boosted their self-efficacy as: knowing the content, mastery experiences, and social persuasion.

For each theme, specific examples are presented as they apply distinctly to Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management. These three areas originated from the self-efficacy survey, which participants spoke about through a think-aloud method during the focus group sessions.

Table 6. Focus Group One: Teachers' Perceptions.

	How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?	How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe how they develop self-efficacy?	How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?
Challenge to Self-Efficacy	External and Internal Limitations (quantity of curriculum, time, student needs, insufficient toolbox) Classroom Management (External) Isolation/Lacking Mentorship (External)	Feeling overwhelmed (Internal) Survival mode (Internal) Powerlessness (Internal) Yo-yo Efficacy (Internal)	
Boosts Self-Efficacy	Knowing the content (Internal) Successful lessons (External) Meaningful feedback (External)		Reflection (Internal) Growth Mindset (Internal) Cognitive Flexibility (Internal)

Teaching Challenges

The teaching profession is full of challenges. The participants in the new teacher focus group described these pressures in terms of feeling overwhelmed with instruction

and student engagement. For classroom management, teachers perceived their lack of control regarding student talking and disruptive behavior as significant challenges. Furthermore, broadly covering all teaching aspects, participants related their distress in feeling isolated or alone with their struggles and their desire for authentically supportive mentorship relationships. The sentiment of instructional isolation, as well as the lack of available, experienced mentors, were prominent factors perceived by participants to challenge their self-efficacy.

Limitations. Teachers noted limitations in time and numbers for instructional strategies and student engagement. Concerning instructional strategies, teachers reported having too much content to cover and too little class time to cover it all. Reese, a middle school teacher, stated:

I think sometimes I try to do so many things in a lesson. Part of it is hard because the curriculum I use has so much direct instruction. I think... if I have to get all of this done in a class period, I don't have time for anything else.

Regarding student engagement, teachers explained that they felt limited in their ability to meet students' needs. All of the participants shared examples of students shutting down because they didn't understand. In the midst of student disengagement, these teachers expressed their desire to help students one-on-one and the success of such a strategy. However, they often felt limited in using this strategy due to time and class size restraints. Rita, also a middle school teacher, shared this story:

Yesterday, we were working on math and one girl said, "I'm not getting it at all" and gave up completely. It was really hard to be patient because she didn't even try. But then they had individual work time, so I pulled her

aside and we talked it through. She got it. So when I can work one-on-one with them they can feel more confident. But that's not always available.

Participants spoke about limitations in instructional and engagement strategies.

New teachers appeared to have a low ceiling of strategies when encountering unanticipated teaching challenges. Participants mentioned that, "Sometimes that will work" or "I think that helps sometimes". The wording "sometimes" suggests that there wasn't strong confidence that the strategy would be successful, but enough that participants would take a gamble on utilizing the strategy again.

Allegra shared her frustration with reaching the limitations of this toolkit, stating, "Other days, I can do nothing more. And I know all the things I'm supposed to do, but at a certain amount of time, I'm like, I've done it all and... it's still a problem." When reaching their toolkit ceiling, participants often described feeling powerlessness and frozen with uncertainty, stating, "I just don't know what to do."

Classroom Management. The challenges and pressures pertaining to classroom management focused on concerns that were distinct from feeling overwhelmed, as seen in instructional strategies and student engagement. Participants spoke about their frustration with the realization that classroom management tools that used to work had lost their effectiveness. Stating that "It's really hard", Rita shared, "I'm doing the same things that I did at the beginning of the year that worked and now they are no longer working." Participants also talked extensively about not being able to control student talking or student behavior. All of the participants shared their frustration with not being able to get students to stop talking and listen. "I've done it all and they're still talking", Allegra

stated. Reese said, “I just cannot understand why [they] will not stop talking”. She added, “In morning classes, they talk the whole way through. And I can just not get them to stop.” In regard to disruptive behavior, participants described how students seemed to control the room at times. Rita shared her belief about her ability to control disruptive behavior as dependent on the students. Specifically, she stated, “I feel like I’m being consistent, so I feel like it’s them. Someone gets them riled up.” These classroom management issues were significant factors that participants perceived as affecting their self-efficacy. Participants also noted an awareness of change in their self-efficacy based on student behavior. “It shouldn’t, but it does,” disclosed Rita as she talked about how not feeling in control of student behavior affected her view of her teaching ability.

Isolation. The participants discussed at length their experiences with feeling isolated or alone in their teaching problems. All of the participants presented meaningful mentorship as an anticipated solution to teacher isolation. Allegra felt she had a mentor, which was significant for her self-efficacy. However, Reese and Rita shared sentiments of disappointment with their perceived lack of mentorship. Rita described this in terms of not having experienced colleagues as mentors. She added that there were some experienced colleagues, but that these individuals were too busy to help. Specifically, she shared the following:

I don’t really feel that I have a mentor teacher. You know, and I need one. It’s like there are a lot of people who are in their second-year teaching or their third year. And that’s not enough. There’s so many of us and we need help and people are busy. I’ve seen that people are busy, but I need help. I don’t know who to go to.

Although Allegra felt she did have a mentor to go to, she echoed the other participants disappointment that experienced teachers sometimes seemed too busy to help her. She noted: “Or there is someone, but they are very busy because they are also teaching. It’s hard to find someone.”

Participants also described this challenge as feeling isolated with not having other teachers who shared their content area. In addition to perceiving that there were either no experienced colleagues or those who were simply busy, participants also talked about feeling completely on their own with instructional concerns. Reese expressed feeling like she didn’t have anyone to talk to regarding decision-making, curriculum, and specific teaching content areas. Specifically, she stated:

There are a lot of decisions we make.... and I just feel like... I don’t know what to do. Nobody else has my curriculum. No one else teaches [redacted- grade level]. No one else teaches (content area). So, literally I just feel almost very secluded; which is hard to build confidence in yourself when you feel that alone.

A significant factor in new teachers’ willingness to seek out and approach self-selected mentors had to do with their comfort level with the mentor. Rita disclosed the challenges of a) finding mentors she feels comfortable with and b) being vulnerable about needing help. She expressed:

Sometimes talking it through with somebody [helps]... But you don’t always want to share your struggles with everybody. So, you have find a person or couple to be like, oh, I feel comfortable to say, “I am doing horribly right now.” Just getting it out helps me out a lot. But then you have to find those people. It’s crazy, I could literally go to anybody here because everyone is so wonderful. But that’s still a vulnerable thing to say, “I am doing terribly as a teacher”.

In contrast to other first year teachers who felt they didn't have a mentor, Allegra shared her experience of having an informal mentor she felt comfortable to seek support from. The relationship had formed because the Allegra had student taught with the mentor teacher the year prior. This cooperating teacher and student teacher relationship established a pattern of the mentor helping and Allegra asking questions. Now, as a first teacher, Allegra continued the familiar pattern of asking for help, though with the addition of a greater level of independence and confidence in her own teaching abilities.

Coping with Dissonance

The teaching challenges created a sense of dissonance between teachers' expectations and the reality of their teaching experiences. In this state of dissonance, teachers experienced feeling overwhelmed and powerless. To cope with a glaring awareness of this gap, teachers described operating from a state they termed "survival mode".

Overwhelmed. First year teachers spoke about feeling overwhelmed with covering curriculum content and meeting student learning needs with limited class time. Teachers also felt overwhelmed by the mere expanse of interests to remember, keep track of, and implement. Participants talked about the challenge of putting into practice everything that was learned in college, alongside everything the reality of teaching requires, and to do it all simultaneously. Allegra, a middle school teacher, described her struggle with this challenge as, "I just can't do it all at one time." Knowing best practices was the easy part; implementing them was the challenge.

Powerlessness. New teachers described a sense of powerlessness as they experienced self-efficacy highs and lows based on the day, class period, or student behavior. Although all participants voiced their belief that teachers have a lot of power to influence, they made a distinction between other teachers and themselves. Allegra explained that she is working hard to obtain more “power”, even though she currently does not feel she has a lot of power to influence students. This sense of powerlessness is seen in participants’ not feeling in control of student behavior and their uncertainty as to how to handle the situation. Reese explained how she feels powerless when she doesn’t understand why students are not following rules and she doesn’t know what to do.

Specifically, she stated:

I just don’t understand. I feel very powerless. I don’t know what to do. I know the natural thing here is to send students out. I don’t really like that but keeping them in the class can disrupt the whole class. I don’t know. That’s a hard one for me.

Rita echoed the connection between not knowing what to do, and therefore not acting in the moment, and the accompanying feelings of powerlessness. She stated:

There are times when I’m like, oh, I need to do something about this. And I feel the powerlessness in that. And then I don’t do anything about it. Then they’re just going to walk all over me tomorrow because I didn’t take action today. So, that’s hard.

Reese shared her thought process when she feels powerless with classroom management challenges. Specifically, she disclosed:

Honestly, sometimes I get straight up annoyed. I just cannot understand why they will not stop talking. I just don’t understand it...And other times, my heart hurts for those kids who are paying attention and have to have a serious talk. Or, I can’t control everyone else and they are suffering. They want to review and they want to learn. They need extra help. But, I can’t even provide that. I had a student tell me after class, “It was really loud

today and I was really distracted.” That hurts as a teacher because I want her to be able to learn. And it’s my responsibility to make sure that doesn’t happen. So, it’s like frustration and a real sadness.

Survival Mode. First year teaching can feel like a daunting task that seems to exhaust all personal and profession resources. The first-year teachers collectively described their point of view as day-to-day survival. In this survival mode, the main goal was to make it through the day. Allegra detailed this process as a downhill spiral starting with enthusiastic commitment and leading to utter exhaustion. Specifically, she stated, “It’s like SURVIVE! SURVIVE! And then there’s survive [fading voice]... survive [voice fading to a quiet whisper]... and then there’s exhaustion.” Allegra further shared that in survival mode, she is often too exhausted at the end of the day to intentionally practice reflection and make adjustments in her teaching. Allegra said, “I don’t always take the time to think about ok, what went well today, what went wrong today.”

Cognitive Processes

Reflection. First year teachers expressed multiple cognitive processes they utilize when they encounter teaching challenges. Regarding classroom management issues in which the teacher doesn’t know what to do in the moment, participants described how they reflected on the experience later. Rita reflected on what could have caused the problem, stating, “Maybe it’s just because I’m not very strict on it and I let things slide.” Another teacher reflected on the specific action she could have taken in the moment, saying, “In hindsight, I think, oh, I should have sent them out at that time.”

Participants also shared how they reflected on the aspects of lessons that made them successful. For example, Reese identified the specific student engagement strategies she had used that contributed to the success of a lesson. She shared a lesson in which she used a partner strategy, intentionally pairing a high student with a low student. Specifically, Reese reflected,

Grouping them with a partner worked out so perfectly. So, I think that the student explanation was so valuable. And they wanted to keep up with their friends. Sometimes it's good to pull them. But for that, it was just an encouragement to them to think, oh, if my peer can do it, I can do it.

In this example, Reese identified the specific best practice of partnering students based on ability. She reflected on why it was effective and added the strategy to her toolkit for future use.

Growth Mindset. In a growth mindset, individuals believe their skills can be improved and that even “failures” are opportunities to learn and grow (Dweck, 2012). Pertaining to instructional strategies, participants shared a perception of being good at some aspects and their awareness and that there was room for growth. Rita shared her awareness that her questioning strategies may lack creativity, but that she had a strategy to help the students connect and engage. Reese recognized her ability to ask questions and shared her desire to ask higher-level questions to engage students in discussions and deeper understanding. These teachers embraced their current reality and future goals as a growth process. They believed that the skills they currently had could be refined and improved. New teachers mentioned that they were “still learning” and “that’s something I’m working on” to get better at different aspects of teaching. Allegra shared her vision

for growth, stating, “Where I am is not where I know I could be.” Participants’ descriptions of their mindset of current and future growth came across as one of optimism, expectation, and confidence that growth would be attainable.

Cognitive Flexibility. Cognitive flexibility refers to a person’s awareness that alternative thoughts and behaviors are available in a given situation, as well as a person’s willingness to enact these options (Martin & Rubin, 1995). New teachers expressed their awareness that they could be thinking or doing things differently in specific areas of teaching. Regarding instructional practices, Reese shared how thinking about and approaching the curriculum differently would allow her students and herself more success. Specifically, she stated,

I think being more intentional in it... I think if I simplified it and could make some big ideas and relate it to real world things, then I could add good questions and help them [students] see the value of it. I think it would start to bring everything full circle.

Trial and Error Practice

Participants also described using trial and error when a tool or strategy didn’t work effectively, when the teacher wasn’t certain which tool would work best, or when the toolkit had been exhausted. Participants talked about trying out multiple tools to address one problem in the hopes that one would be successful. Allegra shared a story about a student who would give up easily. This teacher identified three different strategies she would use with the student because sometimes some of the strategies would work, namely rationalizing with the student, individualizing instruction, and encouraging the student. Specifically, she shared:

I have one particular student who tends to give up quickly. And learning isn't that difficult for her... I know she can do it.... It will be the third time she'll say, oh man, I don't understand. She'll tell me she's giving up. "There's no point." And I'll just sit down with her and be like, that is a lie. You are smart. You can do this. You've done it before, and you can do it again. Just like directly tell her that is not true. [Rationalize with student] And sometimes that will work. And then the one-on-one is where they get it. So, We'll take a few minutes together and she'll be like, oh I get it now. [Individualize instruction] I tell her she is just being dramatic and it's just a math problem. I think that helps sometimes. And I really like encouraging her to. That's something I really enjoy. [Encourage the student]

Rita shared her frustration when she realized that the successful models she had been using ceased to work effectively with the particular group or student in question. To problem solve, Rita brainstormed and implemented different tools. She shared, "... now they [tools] are no longer working. So, I have to try new things." There was a general consensus among all of the participants that they "tried" things out with the hope that it would yield positive results. Allegra shared, "I try to create a relationship with them. Or try to come up with more fun activities and make it more interesting". Rita agreed, "I try to do the same things, like build relationships or I can joke with them." In one example, Allegra explained how she had learned numerous strategies and tools in her teacher education training and was now attempting to implement them, but that it was challenging to implement all the tools she had learned.

Table 7. First Year Teachers' Cognitive Processes.

Cognitive Processes	Student Engagement	Instructional Strategies	Classroom Management
Reflection	Thinking about specific aspects of the lesson that made it successful	Thinking about specific aspects of the lesson that made it successful	Thinking about how a situation could have been handled (in hindsight)
Growth Mindset	"I'm good at some aspects, but it has potential to be even better"	"I'm working on that"	"Some teachers can" and I will in the future.
Cognitive Flexibility	Trial & Error with different strategies	"I think being more intentional in it"	

Initial Spikes in Self-Efficacy

Alongside the challenges that new teachers perceived as tests to their self-efficacy, participants identified specific factors that positively influence their efficacy. Among these were 1) knowing the content 2) mastery experiences, and 3) social persuasion. These themes were similar across each aspect of teaching, including instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management. Knowing the content was most prominent for instructional strategies. Mastery experiences and social persuasion came across as salient factors in all areas of teaching.

Knowing the Content. Regarding instructional strategies, participants talked about the value of understanding the content they teach. For example, Allegra explained that her efficacy is higher for subjects in which she has more knowledge and enjoys to a greater extent. Allegra contrasted her high self-efficacy in one content area with lower efficacy for a subject that is not as well understood. Specifically, she shared:

I really like teaching [redacted], so those are easy for me. But good [redacted] questions? [laughs] Good [redacted] questions I usually just

find in the book. It's just that (subject) has never been my favorite subject. Just seeing how it all interweaves, and all connects. I don't have the whole picture like I do in some of the other classes I teach. So, it's easier for me to come up with more interesting [redacted] questions because I have more to draw on.

Social Persuasion. New teachers discussed the importance of feedback from mentor teachers or principals. In particular, participants voiced that specific positive comments coupled with specific suggestions for improvement boosted their self-efficacy levels. Allegra expressed that any encouraging feedback from anyone was helpful, including a colleague, mentor teacher, or principal. In contrast to experienced teachers, first-year teachers made no distinction as to the importance of the source of feedback. For example, it didn't matter if feedback came from the principal or a mentor teacher. Their desire was simply to receive a greater frequency of feedback.

Participants were quite specific in describing how they thought feedback would be helpful and meaningful to them. New teachers explained this in terms of having an outside perspective. This individual could identify specific causes and solutions for classroom problems that perhaps the teacher would not have even thought of on their own. Rita noted: "There's no one to be like, oh, here's your problem." Reese shared her desire for someone to help her see and understand why things were not working and what she could do to make it better. Specifically, she stated,

And you want someone who will help you see that you could improve. Or what your part in it is. Verses oh, it's just the students... because that doesn't really help either for us to start playing the blame game. Because I know there are things I can do. It's easier to say oh it's just the students. But I need someone to tell me, like for example, maybe I shouldn't have done whole group all class period. Like that would be something on me

that could have been changed. Or give them [students] the opportunity to work together.

Mastery Experiences. The new teacher focus group spoke about how successful teaching experiences raised their self-efficacy levels. In particular, teachers described themselves feeling more confident when “students are engaged and listening” and when “everyone was doing what they were supposed to do.” Reese shared an example of a lesson that went much better than she expected because of specific student engagement strategies she implemented, and how the experience impacted her self-efficacy. Reese shared her story in the following words:

I was actually very nervous about it [the grouping strategy] because it was a very low student with one of my higher students. And I thought, oh no, he’s just going to do the whole thing and this isn’t going to work. I watched them the whole time and the lower student was being raised to the expectation of the higher student. They were bouncing back and forth and doing great. And they seriously pumped everybody up. They were so excited, giving each other high fives. I think for that low student, the encouragement by the higher student... and just the nature of the activity was so good... I was so happy. I went into (teacher’s) room and said, “I have to tell you about this!” So happy, so happy! ... grouping them with a partner worked out so perfectly.

Later reflecting on how the experience impacted her self-efficacy, Reese stated, “After that lesson, I just wanted to tell the whole world how good it was!” This new teacher went on to express the enormous value of even brief experiences with success. She stated, “I’m glad that I have moments like that because otherwise I would be really sad.”

Participants also mentioned that observing the successful teaching of others helped to build their self-efficacy. Allegra in particular shared that observing other teachers had been a great source of helpful insights.

Yo-Yo Efficacy. As these first-year teachers focus on surviving each day... or even each class period within a day, their perception of their self-efficacy fluctuates each day. Their confidence that “I can” or “I can’t” depends on the day, the class period, and/or students’ behavior on a particular day. New teachers described their confidence as changing each day, like a yo-yo going up and down. All of the participants agreed that if they had taken the teacher self-efficacy survey on a different day, that their scores would have been completely different. Regarding her perception of her ability to get students to follow classroom rules, Allegra stated:

It depends on the day for me. Like with this survey, if I had taken it yesterday instead of last week, it would have been so different. Depends on the day. For the most part I can. They at least know what the rules are. They don’t always choose to follow them. They know what they are.

Concerning her ability to control disruptive behavior, Allegra shared, “I was thinking, some days I really can and things are going really great. And other days, I’m like, I can do nothing more... So, it just depends.” Participants also described the day-to-day fluctuations in their confidence in terms of teacher consistency with classroom management. Reese shared,

Oh, each class would be different. Every day, each class for every day. I feel like I don’t necessarily have a consistency. I don’t know if that comes with time or what, but there are some days that, oh my, this is a miracle, they are so good. And then there are other days where I have to laugh to myself because I just cannot understand.

Rita echoed this self-perception of inconsistency in controlling disruptive behavior in the classroom. Specifically, she stated:

Some days I can and some days I can’t... It’s really hard and I never know how it’s going to go. So, I feel like it depends on the day. Most of the time I can. But not all of the time.

Summary

The challenges of limitations, classroom management, and teacher isolation were significant factors influencing new teacher self-efficacy. The cognitive states of feeling overwhelmed, powerlessness, and survival mode contrasted with the cognitive processes of reflection, growth mindset, and cognitive flexibility to create a complex picture of these first-year teachers' thought processes. The highs were high and the lows were low, creating a yo-yo efficacy effect. Although increases in self-efficacy were not consistently sustained, moments of success encouraged new teachers that they were headed in the right direction.

Focus Group Two: Mid-range Teaching Experience

This group included four teachers ranging from between 2 and 13 years of total teaching experience. Based on their experience in their current teaching positions, as well as a variety of prior experiences in multiple schools, this focus group shared their perceptions of the factors that have shaped their self-efficacy. In particular, participants identified internal lenses that predisposed their beliefs about student learning, classroom management, and perceptions of administrators. Participants further described how they develop self-efficacy by developing a teacher toolkit and through dialog with principals or mentor teachers. Participants also talked about strengthening their self-efficacy through 1) responsiveness to students, 2) intentionality, and 3) self-critiquing.

Table 8. Focus Group Two: Teachers' Perceptions.

How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?	How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe how they develop self-efficacy?	How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?
Perspective about students (Internal Lens) Perspective about classroom management (Internal Lens) Perception of Administrators (Internal Lens) Support from Administrators and Mentors (External)	Teacher Changes in responsiveness to students (Internal, Teacher Behavior) Intentional Practice (Teacher Behavior)	Self-reflection/Self-critiquing (Internal)

Perspective About Students

Participants discussed viewpoints they had regarding their students. These perspectives impacted how the teachers crafted their instruction. Jane shared her lens of her students as individuals and how that helped her be more confident with adapting instruction to fit the needs of her students. Dee shared how her confidence in her ability to get students to believe in their abilities was based on what she believed about the students. She disclosed the following:

For me, I think it was, what do I think of the students? Like, what do I believe about their capabilities? I think part of it was this is something that my education program in college talked about... "How do we see the student?" Because how we see the student is really going to impact what we think that they can do. And so, for me, seeing them as first and foremost an image bearer of Christ, like, God has given them the gift of

being able to have knowledge and understanding, and then just what tone am I setting in my classroom? Like, am I setting a tone in my classroom where I think that all of my students can succeed? And all my students can do well? Or is it like, "Oh well, I know that some of my kids are going to do great, and other kids, well, 'meh'." So... how am I setting that up?

These perspectives are examples of lenses or filters teachers expressed. Participants talked about their lenses as processes that were influenced by others and that developed over time. In the first example, the teacher's lens was influenced by more experienced colleagues. In the second example, it was a university preparation program that reiterated the lens that all students can learn.

Perspective About Classroom Management

Participants described contrasting lenses they had regarding classroom management. Some participants described their view of management as a survival skill. Following this lens, behavior is separate from learning. Behavior needs to be controlled in order for learning to take place. Mary, a high school teacher, shared the following:

It's become kind of a survival skill. [laughter] Like, you have to control behavior in the classroom. If you do not, you will not accomplish anything. So, if my goal as a teacher is to discuss [redacted], then I will control behavior, because I will discuss [redacted] instead of... the entire time, "Johnny, sit still." You know? Something, ever since my first year, when as a very young teacher, people said, "Oh my gosh, she's going to die." [Laughter] And I'd be like, "Well, okay, I guess I just have to have really good classroom management."

Another lens was described in terms of setting up the classroom learning community in the way the teacher wanted to manage it. Following this understanding, classroom management is a learning skill that is taught and continually practiced. In this example, Dee discussed how she thought of management in terms of intentionally and

systematically teaching routines and procedures. Dee talked about how she had students practice behavior skills and how she was intentional about teaching rules in ways that students would understand.

It should be noted that these contrasting lenses regarding classroom management may be explained by grade level differences. The first example being a high school classroom management context, and the second being an elementary grade level context. Also, it should be noted that participants' self-efficacy ratings were moderately high in classroom management for both examples of cognitive lenses.

Perception of Administrators

Teachers described how their perspective of the principal's intentions impacted their confidence regarding observations, feedback, and dialog about growth. Participants also described this perspective in terms of developmental processes that changed based on the participants' experience with the particular administrator.

Participants identified one lens shift in terms of moving from perceiving harsh judgment to perceiving benevolent, supportive intent. Jane described this change as, "And so, ... realizing that they are not, hopefully... hopefully they are not looking to slam you with what you've done wrong, but they are looking to help you." Dee expressed her lens change this way, "so then it wasn't so much like... 'She's going to think I'm a bad teacher or I don't know what I'm teaching'. It was more like, 'She's here to say what I've done well and how I can work on that. And we can talk about it together'."

Participants shared how they felt intimidated and nervous when they thought the administrator's intent was judgmental, then trusting and comfortable when they perceived

the administrator's intent was to be helpful. In this focus group's descriptions, participants shared how they began their teaching career with a fearful lens, then shifted their lens as they had multiple positive interactions with administrators during their student teaching or first-year teaching.

Participants identified a second lens shift in terms of perceiving observations as obligatory to perceiving genuine intent towards teacher growth. Jane expressed this contrast in the following words, "...and grow as a teacher. Not just, "Oh check the box, yes, yes, ok, you're done." Mary shared that her experience with her principal informed her lens, stating, "and having a principal at the same time who doesn't just look at evaluation as something you have to do to check off, but as something that's really formative for improving what the next day looks like." These examples suggest that participants had obligation vs. growth lenses depending on their observation experiences with particular administrators.

Table 9. Cognitive Lenses.

<u>Student Learning</u>	<u>Classroom Management</u>	<u>Perception of Administrators</u>
1. All students are able to have knowledge and understanding (All students can learn) (High Self-Efficacy)	1. Classroom management is a learning skill that is taught and practiced in similar ways to academic content. (High Self-Efficacy)	1. Principal/Mentor is here to genuinely help me. (High Self-Efficacy)
2. Students are individuals (High Self-Efficacy)	2. Classroom management is a survival skill. It is separate from learning and has to be in place before learning can occur. (High Self-Efficacy)	2. Principal/Mentor is here to judge me or just check off a list. (Low Self-Efficacy)

Social Persuasion

A significant finding with Focus Group 2 was the enormous value placed on trust relationships with administrators and mentor teachers. All of the participants spoke in depth regarding both positive and negative experiences and how it affected their self-efficacy. Participants discussed the processes and actions that created these trust relationships and how specific types of interactions influenced teachers' thinking processes.

Some described this trust relationship in terms of administrators showing their trust and confidence in teachers. Administrators purportedly accomplished this by expressing support and permission for teachers to experiment with new strategies, whether those strategies turned out successful all the time or not. Mary shared, "It's good to have the freedom to experiment. Like, if you're going to do trial and error, which you have to do, I think, then you want the freedom to do that." Dee, in talking about trying out different tools for different students, voiced how her perception that her administrator trusts her influenced her confidence in her own competence as a teacher. She articulated that permission to try new things and sometimes fail made her "competence completely skyrocket because they [administrator] trust you know what you're doing in your classroom."

Dee also spoke about how a comfort level with her administrator helped her to not only be more receptive to observation feedback, but also to process feedback with the principal. The basis for this comfort level was her perception that the principal "is here to say what I've done well and how I can work on that. And we can talk about it together."

Instead of “the principal is going to think I’m a bad teacher or I don’t know what I’m teaching.” This encouraged Dee to proactively engage in dialog with the administrator, not only with feedback from the principal, but also regarding Dee’s own self-critiquing.

Jane reiterated this connection in perceiving the administrator’s intention to help the teacher grow and the formation of a trust relationship. Jane shared a story from her first-year teaching, when she was not yet comfortable with administrator observations. She described how her interaction with the administrator after the observation changed her thinking about the administrator’s intentions, which promoted a level of comfort and trust. Jane shared the following:

I think it’s really important that your administrator or whoever observes you or whoever is in that place of mentoring understand that you might be a new teacher. Because my first year, my principal walked in to observe me... She walked in, and I froze. I had a math problem on the board and I couldn’t solve it. I could not solve it. And I was mortified. So I was like, “Sometimes, class, we leave problems until the end to solve.” And she walked out, and afterwards I was thinking, “I’m done! I can’t solve math problems. My principal is going to fire me.” So, I walked in for the evaluation meeting and she has this huge smile on her face, and says, “So, did you figure out that math problem?” “Yes!” And she’s like, “I understand. That happens. I know you can do [elementary] math. I hired you. That is ok. But next time, relax! I’m here to help.” ... So, I think the important thing is that relationship with the principal or administrator or whoever is helping you grow as a teacher.

Mary spoke about how trust for an administrator developed out of perceiving that the administrator was providing genuine, authentic feedback instead of checking off an evaluation as a non-essential paperwork task.

In participants’ descriptions, the importance of relationships of trust based on genuine intentions for growth and a level of comfort also applied to mentorship relationships with more experienced colleagues. Kayla, in her fifth year of teaching,

shared her story of negative experiences with mentorship because the nature of the mentoring seemed to lack genuineness. This teacher shared the following story:

I think that what's really important is having that friendship. Because I remember one year, when I was struggling, the principal asked several other teachers to come in and do some model lessons. I felt intimidated because I didn't have a friendship with those people. So... to have someone else come in that I didn't have a friendship with... I felt really intimidated... like they were just doing it to check a box because someone asked them to. So, they'd be like, "Here's a good idea," and then there was no follow-up. You know, it's two weeks later, "Oh, were you going to help me with that behavior plan that you mentioned?" And it's like, "Oh, well I can't, because I have my own class." So, having that relationship where it's like someone wants to help me and also that I'm not afraid to approach them.

In discussing relationships of trust with principals and mentors, Mary shared her story about a friendship she developed with a mentor teacher her first-year teaching and the profound impact that relationship had on her self-efficacy. She emphasized how the relationship was first and foremost a friendship, which then enabled an authentic, meaningful mentorship. She related the following:

I'm really lucky. I think a lot of times, mentor teachers are like... it's a program. It's something that the school sets up for teachers. But, there was no formal program for that when I started at [school name]. But one of the other [redacted] teachers had taught for [redacted] years before she started teaching [redacted]. And we would eat lunch together. It was first of all friendship, second of all mentorship.... So, I was really lucky and had that mentor teacher.

Connecting this theme of trust back to first-year teachers' thoughts, there are comparisons and contrasts. While first-year teachers expressed feeling isolated, teachers with experience expressed the great value of friendships with mentor teachers and relationships of trust with administrators. While first-year teachers spoke of their desire for authentic mentoring relationships, Focus Group 2 shared specific examples of positive

and negative mentor relationships and identified the specific aspects of the relationships that influenced their efficacy.

Teacher Change: Responsiveness to Students

One of the most prominent themes to emerge from focus group 2 was the process of learning to understand students. Participants described this in terms of relationship building with students. Jane described how relationships with students affects everything else in the classroom, including management, engagement, and instructional aspects. She stated:

I think that [student engagement] takes relationships with the kids. If you don't have a relationship with them, then they're not going to listen to you in any way, shape or form. And so, to help them believe that they can do well, and they have this ability, you have to start with where they are, wherever that may be. And then consistency and loving them where they are, and bringing them up to that point. But you can't do that without relationship. Genuine relationship.

In the example above, the teacher described the process she used to build relationships with students, namely loving them where they are and being consistent with them. Mary also described the importance of understanding where students are academically or behaviorally as a way to connect with students. She shared the following experience teaching different groups of students that come with different needs. Specifically, she expressed:

Last year, my group of [redacted] had a lot of behavioral issues. So we had to work through those before we got to content. We had to set expectations and we had a lot of issues that we had to work through that really impeded their learning. This year, it's a wildly different group. Behaviorally, they're awesome, but academically they're really low. So we're working on filling in those gaps before we can get to the [redacted] content. So it's kind of setting those expectations, knowing what you need to cover... but

also kind of seeing where they are as they come to you, and getting them to that final... what the last day looks like as far as learning is concerned.

Participants also talked about how understanding students provided the necessary information to facilitate instruction. Instruction is never in isolation, but rather as a highly interactive dance between the instructor, the content and the students. Jane shared how awareness of student understanding allowed her to change the way she taught the content. In particular, she described the importance of engaging and dialoging with students as a way to understand them. Jane reflected:

Lots of times... we have certain questions crafted. But, once you know your students and you've gotten to see how they interact with the content, or just where they come from, they you are better able to ask those questions to get them to where they need to be and a lot of times, you don't know what those questions are until you talk to them, until you engage with them and say, "Oh, this is... there's a gap here." Or they're wondering this... let's talk about that. Because when they're genuinely interested in something, then they will be more likely to engage in conversation, and that just skyrockets their understanding of the concept, if they're interested in it.

The idea of flexibility and adapting teaching approaches to meet the needs of students relied entirely on knowing students: their strengths, weaknesses, interests, learning style, and culture. Jane spoke about how knowing her students helped her adapt her teaching to help students reach learning and behavior expectations. In the dance of instructor, content, and student, Jane described how understanding students comes first and informs how content is taught. Specifically, she discussed:

Well... being able to adapt and change. Not change your expectation, but change how you help your student get there. And if you see something is not working, then ok, can you change it for that particular student? Or what can you do for that student to help them reach that particular goal? Because that's what they need. Or, they hear it a different way, so you have to go about it a different way as the teacher to help them reach that

expectation. And the flexibility that takes, because you have anywhere from fifteen to thirty kids in a classroom, and that's a lot of behavior [laughs]. But, you still have to know your student well enough to know, ok is this a ... "I need to change your behavior plan? Is this an off day or an off week? What do I need to do to help this students?" But I think you have to be flexible within that and still maintain your expectations.

Other participants discussed how they practiced flexibility for specific students or different groups of students. Dee discussed how she handled the ongoing uncertainty of unanticipated student needs with flexibility. She shared that flexibility was absolutely essential since students' needs are never stagnant, but always changing. She shared how she has a plan, has a toolbox of strategies, but also operates by ongoing flexibility. Kayla shared how she practiced flexibility with different groups of students as she observed their particular behavior and engagement needs. She related that she made adaptations that allowed each group to accomplish the primary instructional or classroom management goal. Even if this looked different for one particular group, Kayla explained that she would adapt based on what worked best for students to access the learning content.

Mary shared a strategy she used to try to understand her students when she was uncertain as to how to help them. She discussed talking to prior teachers and support teachers who already knew those students well enough to speak to what helped them learn best. In contrast to first-year teachers' perception of feeling isolated when they don't know what to do, this teacher shared her view of a teacher community that can help one another understand students better. She disclosed the following:

I think it's also important to recognize that we don't do this in isolation. That we are part of a school community and as part of that school community, I have access to their [students] previous teachers... what

works, what didn't... the behavior issues, the academic challenges, and access to [redacted] personnel who are able to come along side me and work with those students. I mean, this year, the [redacted] have been with the same teacher for [redacted] years. So, she knows them far better than I will get to know them in one year. So just to rely on those resources and using that to help students I think is important.

In discussing flexibility and knowing students, Jane talked about coming to terms with changing her teaching approaches to better engage students. Jane also disclosed how she learned to give herself permission to adapt and change classroom routines. She described coming to terms with previously effective approaches not working for new groups of students. Jane's epiphany was embracing that it was ok for her to do what she knew was best for students even if it looked different from prior years. In trying to know and understand students, Jane further shared how viewing students as individuals helped her to truly connect with and understand what different students needed. She passionately voiced:

But, I think what helped me be able to do that was I looked at the kids as individuals, and I saw them... okay this student loves playing soccer. Okay, we're going to relate everything to sports. And, and that, I saw the change in that one student. And I think that gave me the courage to go, "Okay, maybe we can, you know, what does this student like?" And we were able to kind of mold that year, a little more... specific to their needs. And then the next year, I remembered when I went in, "Oh yeah, last year's class didn't like music." All right, last year's class was sports. So I was sports oriented. [laughs] And, they didn't like sports [laughs]. So... that took several years of understanding... it wasn't me... it was me knowing my students well enough and what they connected with so that I could help them in the way that they needed it. That took a while.

Intentional Practice

Teachers in Focus Group 2 gave attention to their intentionality in many aspects of their teaching. Participants described this in terms of knowing what to do and how to implement those expectations at a practical level.

Classroom Management. All of the teachers talked about the value of thinking through their expectations at the beginning of the school year. Teachers emphasized the importance of continually reinforcing those expectations throughout the year, even when students were doing well. Specifically, Kayla shared:

Really knowing at the beginning of the year what expectations I wanted, and then being able to really start the first few weeks of school, like teaching them [the students] those things right away has really helped make a difference... just setting those expectations really clearly and going over them all the time.

Jane echoed these sentiments, sharing:

I think it's really important to set the boundaries and expectations early and then enforce it. Either with the kids who only make a small mistake, you still enforce it with them because then the whole class sees that, "Oh, this is for everybody. This is not just for the 'good kids', or the 'bad kids', you know."

Dee described her intentionality in terms of knowing what routines to teach and knowing how to teach it. She spoke about teaching classroom management expectations in systematic steps and stages based on priority, explaining in detail how she practically implemented these expectations. Specifically, she shared the following:

I think the first thing is to know what you actually want. Like, what are you going to expect, but what are the priorities? Because if you try to teach all of the expectations for behavior and for classroom management all at once, then that can also, I think, have the opposite effect. Because then the students are like, "well, I'm trying to do this, but also this." So for me, for this year, I went through and kind of jotted down: these are some

of the management expectations that I want to set at the beginning. These are some of the routines and the procedures. Now, which ones are like, day one procedures? Which ones are day one management ones? And I kind of starred those and made sure that from the first day we were going to work on maybe those two or three. And then, which ones are like a first week of school, first month of school? Kind of prioritizing them. Because I think that helps you to really be intentional about this is how I want to manage it. And this is how I can convey that to my students in a way that isn't overwhelming. And that gives them time to kind of practice them and understand them better.

Building a Teacher Toolkit. Participants talked about an active process they intentionally engage in to build their competence. Most of the participants mentioned building a “toolkit” or “toolbox” and shared how they contributed to the toolkit and how they used it. Some of these processes included trial and error, focused practice, practice over time, observing other teachers, and ownership of an individualized toolkit. Dee, in her second year of teaching, described how she started to build her toolkit in her university preparation courses and then continued to refine the toolkit in her first year of teaching. She shared the following:

And she [the professor] would even sometimes say, "Okay, remember this for your toolkit." Or, "Remember this for when you are a teacher." And she [the professor] would give us the resources.... But then it was, "How do I then use, how do I take out the ones that are actually going to be useful for me?" And that part, I couldn't really figure out until I knew I was going to actually have my own classroom and work with my own students... Once I actually got here, I had to stop and think, "Okay, with this group of students, with this environment that I'm in with this school community, which of those tools am I going to put in my 'carrying-around every day' toolkit?" And not just in my, 'all of the things that I have'. Then as you teach, once you have your foundation, you know that this is a thing you're going to use constantly, like, "Oh, I've noticed that this teacher uses this, and it seems to work well for the students in our community, I'm going to try that." And if it works, then you keep it in your toolkit, and if it doesn't, you say, "I can try it again later." Or, just kind of retire it for a little while. And so it's one of those things where I don't think it ever

completely stays the same set of tools. You have your core ones that you would use regularly, and then the ones that kind of have to change with the students or with the time of year, or what you're teaching.

Mary, in her ninth year of teaching, reflected back to her first few years of teaching and described how she used trial and error, alongside feedback from mentor teachers and administrators to build a foundational toolbox. Mary also shared how she actively and intentionally practiced with any tools that were recommended to her. Specifically, she disclosed:

For me some of it was trial and error. And some of it was professional resources. So, my first couple years, I was like "Okay, here's a new strategy! We're going to try this, and we're going to try it," and we did that strategy over and over, and we did that for all different classes... we'd try that skill. And then that would kind of fade away, and we went with another one, and it was like that until I found something else. So, trial and error was one, but definitely relying on professional resources. Mentor teachers who have more experience, who've tried different things, who can step into a situation and say, "Ooh, why don't you approach it from this angle?" My principal is awesome at providing resources, and so using those resources and just kind of taking to heart anything came up in observations... anything... and I use that as tools all the time, because they're so valuable, so yeah, trial and error, professional resources... all that's really important.

In our discussions about building teacher competence through the development of a toolkit, participants made the point that ineffective tools didn't mean the teacher was ineffective. Rather, it could be that the teacher simply needed to use different tools to be effective with the particular student or class. In light of this, participants spoke of the value of colleague relationships where tools and strategies are shared. Dee stated:

...and being willing to try out other tools. Not feeling like you have to stick to the same ones, and if they don't work, then it's you. It may just be... you have to be able to adjust to your students, to your environment, to your climate. Even if I'm working in the same classroom, with the same kids, in a different subject even. So just knowing, there are tools. It's not

something that has to be done the same every time. And being willing to even to share tools with others. Because if you notice that someone else might need a tool or strategy or something, being willing to come alongside them, and say, "I remember when someone introduced me to this." ...Don't be stingy with your tools!

One final point participants made regarding teacher competence was taking ownership and individualizing a toolbox. Dee expressed her thoughts on the importance of not comparing oneself or one's toolbox to colleagues, but rather finding and building a toolbox that fits well with one's individual teaching style. Specifically, this she shared:

It's completely and totally okay if one tool in your best teaching friend's toolbox works amazingly well for them, and they share it with you, and it falls flat. And no matter how many times you try it, that's okay, because you are not them. And as a teacher, I think day in, day out, we're almost constantly... "Oh, I'm not that teacher. Oh, I'm not this teacher." And we forget, no, that's because you're you. And you have your skills and abilities. What works for me, won't work, might not work for [redacted], but it might work for [redacted]. Like, it could be wildly different, and that's okay. That's a good thing. Because that's what makes the variety of teachers.

Self-reflection/Self-critiquing

Participants shared their experiences of learning to self-critique their own lessons instead of depending on others for feedback. Participants shared multiple sources that helped them develop self-critiquing as an integral part of every teaching lesson. These sources included university preparation courses, mentor teachers, and principal feedback. Regarding university training, Dee shared how simulated classroom lessons and subsequent think-aloud discussion introduced her to reflection. Dee noted that an integrated reflection component to all practice lessons helped her get into the habit of always reflecting on every lesson. In her student teaching, Dee benefited from dialog

with an observing principal to further practice reflection. As a first-year teacher, Dee began to truly own self-reflection when she realized that she could provide meaningful feedback on her lessons. Instead of waiting for infrequent feedback from an administrator, Dee recognized her ability to self-reflect and then proactively engage in conversations with her principal based on her own critiques.

Mary shared her experience developing self-critiquing in her first year through dialog with a mentor teacher. This mentor teacher prompted think-aloud reflection, problem solving, and mental anticipatory thinking regarding specific teaching scenarios to help the participant to self-critique, self-reflect, and self-evaluate. Mary shared:

She would say to me, "Tell me what you think." Like, I'm going to have good advice for a first-year teacher. But she would say, "I'm going to talk through this, and tell me what you think in this scenario." So, she would explain the problem that was happening, or you know, something that she was curious how she could improve, and we would just talk through it. And as I watched her process verbally, I learned so much about teaching... That just really taught me "Here's how you teach." I think inherently she also taught me how to critique your own work. So, it was I guess we were talking about a specific lesson, but a deeper level, she taught me to be reflective and evaluative. And of course, I knew those terms uh in teacher education, but it was like, well, how do I actually do that? What does that look like on a practical level, when you have... twenty-five pairs of eyes in front of you. What do you do with that?

Focus Group Three: Veteran Teachers

This group included five teachers ranging from between 9 and 41 years of total teaching experience. Their rich and varied teaching experiences formed the basis for this focus group's personal stories and insights. As these teachers shared their perceptions of the factors that have shaped their self-efficacy, the following themes emerged: learning

curve challenges, support from administrators, and longevity. In describing how their self-efficacy developed, participants spoke about adapting to the needs of students and intentionally practicing specific strategies. Participants also described processes they utilized to keep perspective of challenges, including: mental models, revisiting calling/commitment, and intentional positivity. The following narrative describes each of these topics in detail according to participants' own voices.

Table 10. Focus Group Three: Teachers' Perceptions.

How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?	How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe how they develop self-efficacy?	How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?
BOOSTS SELF-EFFICACY Support from Administrators (External) Prior Success (Internal & External) Longevity (Internal & External)	GROWTH CYCLE Self-efficacy from prior success (Internal) ↓ Learning Curve Challenges (External) ↓ Dissonance (Internal) ↓ Perspective Shift (Internal Cognitive Processes) ↓ Teacher Change: Responsiveness to Students (Teacher Behavior) ↓ Intentional Practice (Teacher Behavior)	COGNITIVE PROCESSES Mental Models: Remembering Prior Success (Internal) Reconsider calling/commitment (Internal) Intentional Positivity & Contentment (Internal)

Growth Cycle: Expansion of Beneficial Doubt Loop

Through participants' stories emerged the Self-Efficacy Growth Cycle, which expands on Wheatley's (2002) doubt cycle and the doubt loop from my pilot study (2017). Focus group three participants described the stages of this cycle to include:

- 1) The Gold Standard (High self-efficacy from prior teaching experiences)
- 2) New teaching context/challenges
- 3) Dissonance
- 4) Perspective Shift
- 5) Change teaching approaches
- 6) Intentional practice
- 7) Equilibrium
- 8) Self-Efficacy Growth

One veteran teacher in particular, Cheryl, described this process clearly. Cheryl shared her story of prior successful teaching experience and high self-efficacy that was challenged in the new context due to her inexperience with ESL learners. She shared feeling "like everything I knew about teaching was wrong" in her transition to SCS. Through gaining a new perspective of the problem and identifying specific solutions, Cheryl was able to adjust her teaching, which now informs her planning as an intentional practice. Cheryl described how she thought about the context in terms of responsiveness to student needs and made changes in her teaching to better meet those needs. She also shared how school professional development with ESL helped her to know how to respond to student needs. Specifically, Cheryl shared:

When I first came to SCS, I found that activities and assignments that worked well with my students in the states **[The Gold Standard]** did not work with my students here **[Challenge]**. At first, I did not understand why **[Dissonance]**, but later I realized it was because English is the second or third language for many of my students **[Perspective]**. Even before the ESL training we have had, I started rewording and modifying my assignments and activities, making sure core knowledge was retained, but

making them more manageable [**Teacher Behavior Change**]. Some assignments I eliminated because of time restraints. I now realize as I plan [**Intentional Practice**] that it will take my students longer (often twice as long) to accomplish a task as it took my US students.

In follow-up individual interviews, participants shared more examples of this doubt loop. In some examples, the process was a significant event. In other examples, the process cycled on a continual basis as teachers yearly or daily encountered new instructional or behavioral challenges. In each example, however, the same basic pattern emerged. This is explained in greater detail in the “Themes” section.

Prior Success, New Challenges & The Dissonance Gap. Participants shared their stories about coming to teach at SCS for the first time. Even though these teachers all had prior teaching experiences in schools in the United States, they described the new challenges they faced with ESL, culture, discipline, and shattered expectations. Participant talked about how their strong teaching efficacy was quickly shaken in the new teaching context. Sunny, a veteran in her 12th year voiced, “First year here is hard, it’s hard. ... You could be a teacher for 25 years and have won like the Kappa Delta Pia award...” Cheryl, a veteran in her 16th year stated, “It doesn’t matter, it’s like a whole new game.” Thinking back to her transition to SCS, Kim, also a veteran teacher, shared her experience, stating:

We came in and it [confidence] was quickly stripped away. The only benefit was, "I did it once, I can do it again. I have to learn my students and learn the culture and learn." So, it wasn't the shot quickly went away, "okay I have to work on this." But, yeah, that, "oh, this won't be a problem," to "oh my goodness, this is... shocking."

Teachers spoke in detail about having to learn how to teach differently for ESL students. George, a veteran teacher with prior experience in the states, expressed how he quickly became aware of students limited vocabulary, “When I arrived in this country” and that he didn’t “remember it being a problem before.” Sunny echoed her shock with ESL needs and also experiencing more challenging classroom management issues her first year at the school. She disclosed the following:

So, I went from a very home-schoolish environment to here, which was shocking. I had like one discipline problem a year, maybe. So I think... the learning curve was in discipline, and also... word choice and how I said things. And like, "I'll read through the Chronicles of Narnia again, 'cause that's what I did with my [redacted] in the States and we went through them all in one year." I started to read aloud and just watching their faces be like, wrong read-aloud! I started reading the [redacted]. Big mistake! They were so lost.

George talked about the challenge of understanding students’ culture. He shared, “That first year was incredible as it was a new culture.” George went on to describe classroom management challenges. He stated, “Peer pressure is wonderful sometimes. But in the beginning, peer pressure was the other way. I lost half of my, it was an [redacted] class, because half of them would sit there and do nothing.”

Misty, a teacher of nine years, but relatively new to the school, disclosed her experience with having job expectations that turned out quite differently than expected. She shared that the challenge was the expectation that she had during the application process and the reality she faced with her actual job responsibilities.

In describing these challenges, participants used the terms “adjustment”, “learn my students”, and “learning curve.” Participants viewed these challenges as aspects that were unexpected and difficult to adapt to.

Perspective Shift: Cognitive Processes. In the face of teaching challenges, teachers used a variety of cognitive processes to strengthen their self-efficacy. Participants in Focus Group 3 shared processes that reflect intentionality in training oneself to think about challenging situations in more productive ways. These cognitive processes include: *mental models*, *intentional positivity*, and *reconsidering ones' calling and commitment*. These are detailed below.

The first cognitive process to emerge from the results of this study was *Mental Models*. Mental models involve mentally designing concepts that fit with past or future concrete events (Ruff & Shoho, 2005). Participants thinking processes closely resembled mental models, especially pertaining to their descriptions of using strategies that had worked successfully for them in the past. Participants seemed to create a memory storage bank of successful strategies that they would then draw from for use in present time situations.

Sunny shared her learning curve experience in her transition to SCS. In the face of new and unfamiliar challenges, Sunny remembered her prior teaching success. During the transition, she believed that she had teaching strengths and gifts even though the present experience of her teaching did not feel successful. Sunny described recognizing that the new context was different from her previous teaching context. Therefore, she framed the problem as a context specific challenge, recognizing that “no, I've done this. So, it's not me.” She admitted that without some prior successful teaching experience in a different context, she may have personalized the problem as a teacher identity question of “I don't

know, can I do this? ...maybe?" Prior success provided Sunny with the confidence that "I knew I could... at least handle it."

A second cognitive process emerged as *Intentional Positivity*. In the face of shattered expectations, Misty shared how she intentionally focused her mind on staying positive and looking for any positive aspect in the context. Misty shared that choosing contentment helped her to stay above frustration, discouragement, and wanting the situation/context to change. She expressed the following, "Just... trying to be positive. That's kind of where my whole attitude is right now, like, okay... what does that look like? Being content..."

A final cognitive process to emerge was *Reconsidering Calling/Commitment*. When teachers felt like quitting or leaving, one process that helped them was to reconsider the calling they felt they had to be at the particular school and the commitment they had made to the school. Sunny disclosed how considering her obligation in signing a two-year contract was the only thing that helped her stay past the first year. She stated that, "if it weren't for the contract I had signed, I would've left." Sunny also described her sense of obligation to stay as a calling she felt to come to the school. Even though her transition and first year at the school was challenging, she stayed because of her sense of a calling. She expressed, "That's what I had to rely on, I know God called me here." Even with a teaching contract and a sense of being called, Sunny still struggled to mentally embrace thinking about the entire school year. Instead, she allowed herself to only focus on half of the year at a time. She stated:

And, I was like, "I'm gonna make it 'till Christmas. I'm gonna make it 'till Christmas. I'm gonna make it 'till Christmas." And, after Christmas, "I'm gonna make it 'till May, I'm gonna make it 'till May."

Now, in her ninth year at the school, Sunny has a longevity perspective, has put down roots, and has made the context her home. It was the combination of her initial commitment in the form of a job contract and her sense of a calling that helped her stay beyond a challenging first year.

Teacher Change: Responsiveness to Students. When teachers described encountering challenges, particularly ESL teaching, they spoke about focusing on student needs. Participants talked through how they adapted their teaching based on students' understanding. George shared how he continually practices responsiveness to students because new gaps in understanding appear in class all the time. Specifically, he shared:

In class discussions... I've given information, they're asking the questions. Sometimes I can ask a question that would perhaps get them thinking, but it's nothing I'm prepared for. It's... on the spot. The other thing is questions on the quizzes and tests, the written ones especially, I have to constantly define normal vocabulary terms, because I'm not aware that they do not understand the term, "basket," "boulder," and other similar terms. So being fully aware of their limited vocabulary, I do not see the question as a problem until they ask a question during the test.

Kim shared a similar experience in which her responsiveness to students meant stopping an exam to ensure understanding for ESL learners. She voiced:

I remember teaching high school science and it was, "which of the following is not an example of equilibrium?" And, one of the responses was shivering, and I had an exchange student, and he was from the Philippines, he had never experienced shivering. Like, he was like, "wh - what?" So, we were just trying to say it and we're like, "that's not helping him either." So we started doing this [shivering motions] and he's just [blank stare] so I had the whole class help. Like, we just paused the test and we had to help him understand. And, that was like my first year

teaching. So, then I realized that, oh, I have to make sure that when I have the exchange students in that I'm ... more focused on what words do they not know that would be new to them, because it is, it's like that "oh, everybody knows it."

Intentional Practice. The main way to develop stronger self-efficacy, as described by participants, was to intentionally practice specific skills. Participants frequently used the terms “think through”, “practice”, and “plan it” to describe the processes they used to build their own competence. Kim, in her 11th year of teaching, stated, “I think it takes practice. I think it takes practice as a teacher, because it's not something that comes easy. I mean you really have to like, work at it, plan it.” Kim reflected back on her first year of teaching and how she used intentionality and practice to become better at teaching critical thinking to her students. She shared:

... the first year of just studying Bloom's taxonomy. And going, "okay, I need to go here. I need to go here. I need to go here." Because, it's to make them think, and give them those critical thinking skills that are so important and thinking through... But, yeah it takes a lot of practice.

Sunny shared her experience working with grade level colleagues to intentionally implement critical thinking through strategic student grouping. She detailed:

We started dividing our kids into low, medium, high, and we would actually look at Bloom's taxonomy. And the lower kids, we would... try and stick in those basic... And, then we'd incorporate the higher one's for the high readers, so that way they were all reading the same thing, but like, you weren't throwing high taxonomy questions at the ESL and the [special education] kids. So, they were all doing something, but it was, like the skill level of critical thinking was different. That way it was kinda differentiated easily.

In discussing the skill of crafting good questions, Cheryl talked about intentionality in thinking through types of questions and predicting how students would

potentially answer the questions. Cheryl shared an example of learning to be more intentional after a dilemma with student plagiarism. Specifically, she stated:

I think that you have to think through the questions to get to more than just a yes or no, but also, say it's something they're taking home... something that, they have to answer on their own. Early on in my teaching career I did a, my first year, had an assignment and I think thirteen out of thirty students copied from the internet. And, my principal just sat down with me and said, "It's really about the way you write the assignment. Not that the assignment was bad, but you need to put it together as an assignment that depends more on their response than on what they can find from another source." And so, or like, where they would be tempted to copy and paste. Like, something they feel like they can't answer, and answer well. Not that I don't have plagiarism issues, but I think that the more we think through our questions as a writing assignment, and think, "how will the student answer that..." I think that... we can guide them better.

Through each of these examples, participants expressed the enormous value that being intentional in working at, planning, and practicing specific teaching skills had on improving their competence and confidence. Teaching skills were not something that just happened by osmosis or even by time and practice alone, but rather through intentional practice.

Equilibrium & Self-Efficacy Growth. The result of teacher perspective change, teacher behavior change, and intentional practice was positive student outcomes. When teachers consistently experienced success, their level of self-efficacy grew. Teacher also felt a sense of equilibrium (in contrast to dissonance) when they saw that the gap between their expectations of success and current experience grew closer together. This growth cycle is explained in greater detail in the Themes section.

Efficacy Sources

This focus group identified two specific factors that have influenced their self-efficacy, namely, support from administrators and longevity (including prior success over time). These factors were connected to the growth cycle. Support from administrators was seen most closely related to helping teachers regain perspective or be introduced to an entirely new perspective. Longevity gave teachers perspective and understanding of the specific strategies and approaches they needed to be intentional about to create successful experiences.

Social Persuasion. Participants perceived that their self-efficacy was strengthened when they had administrators who acted supportive, committed, on the teacher's side, and appreciative. Participants stated that it was more difficult to be a confident teacher when administrators were not visible, replaced often, seemed indifferent, or undermined teachers with students and parents. Teachers spoke in depth regarding the value they placed on frequent observations with follow-up feedback and connected this to feeling supported by their administrator. Cheryl shared how principal support in the form of observations/feedback, or lack thereof, influenced her self-efficacy. Specifically, she shared:

I think administration has a lot to do with it. My first year in the states, the school had a lot of support. I was being observed regularly as a first-year teacher. I had a mentor teacher. I felt like I was really well supported or would not have survived.

Cheryl then contrasted her first year at SCS with what she perceived as little support, stating:

It was a small class, but I also had very little support. I was not observed at all my first year. One time I asked another teacher to come in because I was having some discipline issues with one of the groups and that was in a different class that I had... There were some issues with that. So, I just asked this other teacher to come in and just give me some feedback on what's going on because I felt like I needed some help with that. And, then that next year I don't think I was observed again. But, my third year I was observed once, and I never met with the principal afterwards to get any feedback.

Cheryl went on to contrast this negative experience with the high level of administrative support she feels now, stating, “and now that is very different. And, I feel like we have a lot of support. And, I think that is what brings it [confidence] up... It's a positive situation.”

Participants also disclosed their perception of frequent administrative turnover as a significant challenge that has influenced their self-efficacy. George related his perception of high administrative turnover to students' perceptions of high teacher turnover. Specifically, he stated:

Well, the main thing is administration. And, there's various changes. For many years, there was change like almost every year... at least one of the main principals was new. And, it's quite the adjustment. Just like it's an adjustment for the students to have a new, a different teacher every time. Even though that's a very common thing in a large school in the states. Although here, students do get frustrated their teachers are always changing. They feel more safe and secure if they have at least one teacher that they've had before. They feel a sense of "ah" or dread as the case may be. But, I think in most cases it's a positive thing.

The perception of administrators being on the teacher's side regarding confrontations with students or parents was a significant issue. Participants disclosed that this factor made the difference between feeling good about being at the school and

serious consideration of leaving the school. George shared his positive experiences with administrators, stating:

There were five years, same administrators, ...when you saw them coming you were happy. "Here comes, so and so," or "here comes..." But, you knew it was not going to be a confrontation. They were there to help people. It was... five years... There were problems or whatever, but it felt good to be here.

Sunny shared her perception of the impact that a lack of backing can have on a teacher's self-efficacy. Specifically, she voiced:

It's hard to be a confident and good teacher if you don't feel like administration has your back. If you feel like they're going to take the side of the student. They're going to take the side of the parents, because they're trying to save face. And, it's very frustrating. Because, how can you be a good confident teacher if you know that they're going to end up going to the side of the parents just because they have money.

Sunny went on to explain that past colleagues had disclosed their negative experiences regarding this issue and the impact it had on some teachers' intentions to seek teaching positions elsewhere. She articulated, "It's one of the reasons why [redacted] left. It's also the reason why [redacted left]. It happened. [Redacted] had a kid failing and was essentially punished for it. So, it has happened... it definitely hits a teacher completely."

One final aspect that participants talked about regarding trust relationships with administrators was the value placed on feeling appreciated by 'the boss'. Misty was overcome with tears as she shared an experience in which she perceived the administration to be completely indifferent to her efforts. She expressed the following:

I think that if you are appreciated... that helps. And maybe I am appreciated; it's just not ever verbalized. ...There's an expectation, "Oh, you have a free moment. Oh, I'm gonna dump that on you. Oh you have a free moment, that oh..." So, that's where it's not, you know, 60 days in, not one person has even said, "man, thank you." And, that's hard.

These examples show participants' perceptions that trust relationships with administrators are a powerful factor that influences teachers' self-efficacy. According to participants, trust towards an administrator develops from administrative behaviors that consistently demonstrate support, commitment, backing, and appreciation towards teachers.

Longevity. Participants past the 10-year mark expressed a longevity perspective. They described this in terms of thinking about being in teaching for a long time and the skills they would need to make it the distance. Speaking about classroom management, Sunny shared the following:

... Classroom management... just being able to control the kids who are constantly interrupting. So, I think that's a huge skill you have to have to be in teaching for a long time. Like, if you can't control disruptive behavior the room's gonna be out of control, and teaching quickly becomes unpleasant.

Participants also talked about longevity as a significant factor that has influenced their self-efficacy. Participants explained that building relationships with school families over multiple years results in automatic student respect that doesn't have to be earned from year to year. Teaching older siblings, uncles, or even parents makes a difference in how much students will or will not test or challenge a teacher. Sunny shared how staying at the school over many years, truly investing, and being consistent has made it much easier for her to be a confident teacher. Specifically, she stated:

I think a big part of... knowing you can... The more you put down roots in a place... It's kinda like you said where class disruption and stuff like that is not so much an issue anymore. You have to fight for it at the beginning, but if you stay in a place. The kids come to know, which teachers they can do that with and which ones they can't. And, they're not

gonna push that with the teachers they know they can't. Or, they have that relationship with you. Like, a lot of the kids I had them in [redacted] grade... and, they just know. But, I think it's harder to be a confident teacher if you're constantly bopping from one school to another or switching places all the time. Because, I think, like, as the students get to know you, and as you're there and, you know, there's that consistency. They come to respect you more. And... especially here, I think kids get really hardened to the teachers that just come for a year and leave or two years. Not so much the younger kids, but the older kids have really hardened. 'Cause it's like, "oh, well, really are you gonna stay? Why should I invest my time in you?" But, like, I think they do have a certain respect and, I don't know, they're just better kids for the teachers that they're like, you know, "this is year eleven for me, okay, you're staying." I don't know, I think it makes a difference.

However, even with this longevity perspective, some participants readily admitted that they do sometimes slip back into survival mode and just try to make it to the end of a teaching day. In recalling her first-year survival thinking, Misty expressed, "I don't like that feeling though. It goes away. And, sometimes it's 'I'm gonna make it to 3 o'clock.'" Therefore, although longevity came across as a prominent theme among focus group 3, the idea of short-term survival was never completely eradicated from participants' thinking.

Summary of Focus Groups

The main commonalities among all of the focus groups included 1) trust relationships with administrators/mentors and 2) building competence through intentional practice and reflection. Contrasts included a pattern of moving from dependence on external feedback and support (lower self-efficacy, novice teachers) to the independence of consistently self-critiquing one's own teaching (higher self-efficacy, select veteran teachers). Another difference among groups was a contrast between day-to-day survival

(novice teachers) and a longevity perspective (veteran teachers). The longevity perspective included putting down roots, building long term relationships with school families, and establishing one's good reputation as a teacher in the school community. Of special interest was the common agreement among teachers who came to the school with prior experience that their first year shook them to the core in their teaching efficacy. These teachers described the transition as distinct from first year teaching in that there was an awareness of the new context as a learning curve. In contrast to transition teachers, first year teachers described everything as a learning curve and tended to view success or failure as a reflection of their teaching identity "doing poorly" or "doing well." Transition teachers appeared more able to separate their teaching identity from the context by reminding themselves that they had been successful previously and by changing many ways in which they had taught to make learning work for ESL students.

Table 11. Summary of Perceptions for Focus Groups 1, 2, and 3.

	How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?	How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe how they develop self-efficacy?	How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?
Focus Group 1 (first year teachers)	CHALLENGES Limitations (quantity of curriculum, time, student needs, insufficient toolbox) (External & Internal) Classroom Management (External) Isolation/Lacking Mentorship (External) EFFICACY SOURCES Knowing the content (Internal & External) Mastery Experiences (External) Social Persuasion (External)	Feeling overwhelmed (Internal) Survival mode (Internal) Powerlessness (Internal) Yo-yo efficacy (Internal)	Reflection (Internal) Growth Mindset (Internal) Cognitive Flexibility (Internal)
Focus Group 2 (2-13 years)	Perspective about students (Internal Lens) Perspective about classroom management (Internal Lens) Perception of Administrators (Internal Lens) Social Persuasion (External)	Teacher Changes in responsiveness to students (Internal, Teacher Behavior) Intentional Practice (Teacher Behavior)	Self-reflection/Self-critiquing (Internal)

Table 11 Continued.

	EFFICACY SOURCES	GROWTH CYCLE	COGNITIVE PROCESSES
Focus Group 3 (9-41 years)	Social Persuasion (External)	Self-efficacy from prior success (Internal) ↓	Mental Models: Remembering Prior Success (Internal)
	Mastery Experiences (Internal & External)	Learning Curve Challenges (External) ↓	Reconsider calling/commitment (Internal)
	Longevity (Internal & External)	Dissonance (Internal) ↓	Intentional Positivity & Contentment (Internal)
		Perspective Shift (Internal Cognitive Processes) ↓	
		Teacher Change: Responsiveness to Students (Teacher Behavior) ↓	
		Intentional Practice (Teacher Behavior) ↓	
		Equilibrium & Self- Efficacy Growth	

Individual Case Study Profiles

In order to understand how self-efficacy develops in teachers, it is important to understand teachers' core beliefs, cognitive lenses, and personal stories. Selected participants each took part in a one-on-one individual interview in the fall of 2017. During these interviews, participants reflected on experiences that shaped their self-efficacy. The interview protocol for this study was based on a series of semi-structured questions. These questions aligned with three research questions, which specifically targeted 1) efficacy sources, 2) development processes, and 3) cognitive processes regarding self-efficacy. The interview questions included topics for core beliefs,

confidence, challenges, inspiration, relationships, transitions, and crisis points (See Appendixes for Table of Specifications). The following profiles illustrate the personal portraits and stories of participants. Participants' self-descriptions provide the basis for emerging themes later in this chapter.

The subsequent research piece reveals in-depth, individual descriptions of three selected interview participants: 1) The New Teacher, 2) The Decade Teacher, and 3) The Veteran Teacher. Descriptions emphasize participants' internal perspectives about themselves as teachers, their students, and the teaching profession as well as teachers' perceptions of external factors that impact their self-efficacy. Each profile also highlights teachers' experiences in developing self-efficacy and their thought processes as they encounter challenges to that confidence. These descriptions serve to illustrate the shifts in self-efficacy, including both growing confidence and doubts in one's abilities that even the most experienced teachers spoke about.

Allegra: The First Year Teacher

Teaching Profile

Teaching Biography. Allegra is a recent college graduate with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a concentration in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL). As a fifth-grade teacher, she teaches all content areas, from Language Arts and Math to Science and History. Allegra completed two prior student teaching assignments, one in the States and one at the current school where she teaches. Additionally, she had

international teaching experience as an ESL teaching intern in Hong Kong for a semester during her college experience.

This young teacher braved accepting her first teaching position at an international school in the Dominican Republic. Therefore, it should be noted that the adjustments of moving to a different country were combined with a first-year teaching experience for Allegra. Interviewing her for this study in October, early in the teaching year and mere months after international relocation, served to accentuate every stress, pressure, and challenge imaginable. It also served to easily extract the active, current thinking processes in Allegra's mind about these challenges. There was no need for her to try to remember what she was thinking about regarding a teaching challenge five or ten years ago. Rather, she easily spoke about challenges she experienced the very day of the interview.

A walk into Allegra's classroom immediately reveals her enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning. She displays energy and passion with the teaching content and warmth combined with firmness in her interactions with students. She enjoys finding ways to help students understand, be genuinely interested, and be engaged in the curriculum content. At times, she will integrate interactive media to illustrate a concept and engage students deeper in discussion.

Self-Efficacy. Allegra scored herself as 5.91 for her personal teaching efficacy. This score was slightly above average in comparison to the first-year teacher focus group scores. However, the first-year teachers all agreed that their scores would be quite different if the survey was taken on a different day. In light of this, the numerical score

carries little or non-significant weight. What the score does mean, according to Allegra, is that on the particular day she took the survey, she felt confident at about a 5.91 level (with 1 as low and 9 as high). On this particular day, she rated herself as having “a great deal” of influence (score of 8) regarding, “To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?” and as having very little or some influence (score of 4) on the item, “How much can you do to help your students value learning?” The remainder of the items she scored herself in the range of “some influence” and “quite a bit” of influence.

Motivation. Allegra describes teaching as fun. She loves learning herself and enjoys helping students grow in learning. She loves building relationships and interacting with students. She also appreciates friendships with teaching colleagues and seeing these individuals every day.

Positive Impact. Allegra’s beliefs about her ability to positively impact her students came from her own early experiences with teachers. She stated, “I know my life has been changed by teachers, so I hope one day to do the same for some of my students.” Allegra went on to reflect on her experience with a memorable second grade teacher who completely changed her view of learning, education, and school.

Specifically, she shared:

All through preschool, kindergarten, and first grade I was very shy and had a lot of school anxiety, so I would just like, cry on the way to school just every day... Part of it was because I was afraid of my teacher. I was afraid of my teachers in kindergarten and first grade. Like, other kids would get in trouble and so the teacher would yell at them and I would be in the corner crying even though I didn’t get yelled at... So, second grade

I had a really great teacher. I felt appreciated. It was fun. I didn't feel scared anymore. And apparently, I told my mom in second grade, "I don't think I'm going to be shy anymore. I think it'll be fine." And I think she helped me kind of come out of my shell and start enjoying school for the first time in my life. So I think she made a big difference in my life, as far as, not being afraid of school, and being comfortable, and appreciating learning. And seeing, "oh learning is fun." It was good, you know? So that was huge for me.

This teacher's impact on Allegra is evident still in Allegra's genuine love for learning.

Through both the focus group session and individual interview, Allegra often mentioned her delight in learning new things... just for the sake of learning on its own merit. A persistently curious, self-motivated learner, Allegra models her love for learning in the classroom and inspires her students to that end as well. This love and enjoyment of learning is the torch Allegra aspires to pass on to her students, to make a difference in their lives.

Inspiration. Allegra listed a wide spectrum of teachers who had inspired her as she interacted with them or observed them teach. In addition to the elementary teacher who made learning memorable, she also talked about two mentor teachers she worked with during her student teaching, from whom she had learned a great deal. Regarding one mentor teacher, she stated, "I'd be very happy to be half as good as she is at teaching." About the second mentor teacher, she reflected about borrowing something specific for her own toolkit. Specifically, she shared:

Kids would be like, "ugh, I'm so dumb" and she'd be like "mm, you can't be dumb and get into my class. That's not how this works. I don't have dumb kids in my class, so clearly you're not dumb." And I like that, because it just shut it down like "eh, you're not." So, I use that all the time, kids will be like "ugh, I'm dumb" or they'll call each other dumb. Like "oh, well you must not be dumb cause you're in my class room. You

can't get in here unless you're, you know, smart. So, you're not dumb." So, I took that.

Beliefs About Good Teaching. Allegra described her beliefs about good teaching by discussing three categories: relationships with students, instruction, and assessment. Regarding relationships with students, Allegra spoke about the importance of building relationships with students and making students feel safe, appreciated and respected. Allegra believes that relationships with students are the foundation of all other teaching aspects. For instruction, Allegra shared her view of good teaching as, "Making lessons clear, making lessons interactive, making lessons diversified so that it can fit a variety of student levels." In describing the importance of assessment, she talked about ensuring valid, differentiated testing. She also emphasized the importance of both formal and informal assessment that can inform teaching and re-teaching.

Efficacy Sources

Mastery Experiences. Allegra discussed success in terms of seeing growth in students, whether purely academic or regarding any area of growth as an integrated person. Allegra explained that she views her work as a teacher as having value when she sees growth in students. Specifically, she shared:

I think any time I see growth in my students. Like if I see, "oh look you couldn't do this before, and now you can do this now." That means I'm doing something right. Like, I must be doing something right. Then, just personally, relationship building. If they'll go out of their way to say hi to me, or talk to me, or like tell me something exciting that happened over their weekend that's not necessarily school related. I think that's relationship progress. Or even those kids that are really hard if they don't act out in my class that's like okay good, my relationship, what I'm trying

to do with this kid is working. So that is helpful too. So I think any time I see my children grow, whether that be spiritually, academically, socially, whatever. It's just like, oh good! Something good is happening.

Allegra also described success as having successful lessons. In the examples she shared, successful lessons consisted of attracting student interest, attention, engagement, and resulting in student learning. She reflected on a recent lesson in which she integrated a video clip into her lesson to illustrate the concept of injustice towards immigrants. She disclosed that she felt particularly confident with her teaching in regard to the lesson. She described the lesson in the following words:

We are talking about immigration and well, you know, in language arts. So I found a music video... Anyway, it talked about immigration and it was a good song and it was cool, and I was like, oh the kids are going to like this, and it actually has to do with a lot of what we're talking about... So I was like, "oh I can just bring this in," and it wasn't in the curriculum, and it wasn't necessarily on the lesson plan, but I'm like, "this'll be good." And it was. And the kids loved it. And they were really interested in it, and they paid attention... We talked about some big metaphors in the song that they really understood, because they wanted to understand it. So there's the part where it talks about, "Peter Piper claimed he picked 'em, but he just underpaid Pablo." Talking about Mexican workers. That's what we're talking about in [redacted – the curriculum]. So I'm like "Okay, so who's Peter Piper?" And then, "okay, who does Pablo represent? Okay what is she trying to say?" and so putting that together was really cool and that was fun because it was like I got to bring this in. This is something I care about, and something I'm interested in and I got to share that with my kids, and that was fun, and they learned something too.

It can be noted in the example above that it was important for Allegra to contribute something uniquely personal into the lesson. Furthermore, the success of the lesson could be directly attributed to what Allegra added.

Alongside the successful experiences are less than successful moments in which Allegra described feeling less confident. Identifying behavior and learning challenges as

the main tests to her self-efficacy, Allegra disclosed how she often reaches a point of frustration and not knowing what more to do. Regarding classroom management, she shared,

“When I have those days it’s like, oh my, I don’t know what to do anymore, It’s out of control.” In light of student learning, she stated, “Ok, they’re going to get this test, they know this. And, then they don’t. It’s frustrating... I think I’ve been super clear on this, like we worked on this over and over. I think they get it. And then the test comes and it’s like the same format and it’s just ‘pleh’. They didn’t have it. What am I going to do?”

Allegra talked about how successful lessons following on the heels of seemingly unsuccessful lessons helped to remind her of the value in her efforts. Allegra shared an example of a science experiment lesson that created a lot of frustration for her. She stated, “It felt like I was talking to a wall. They weren’t listening, they were talking, they were interrupting... they were just not paying attention, they were not trying... Some kid had a thermometer in their mouth! I was like, no! We’re not taking your body temperature right now. Oh, it’s frustrating” In her state of frustration, a co-teacher was in the room and available to step in, allowing Allegra to take a mini-break to take “some deep breaths.” Allegra then continued teaching and finished the lesson, reflecting, “It wasn’t great, but we got through it. And it wasn’t the worst thing ever.” She went on to share a very successful lesson in a different subject the same day that helped her feel confident again, stating, “It was a deeper discussion and they were very interested in it. It was good. But, that was the same class, none of my kids changed, and it was like, thirty minutes later. It just changes so quickly.”

Allegra explained that any small successes following “frustration moments” do wonders to restore her self-efficacy and sense of “it’s worth it”, stating:

Sometimes I get very frustrated at them, like today, today was a hard day, but they’re worth it. And sometimes when it’s just like, you’re at that wits end, and they do something, and it’s just like, oh okay. Like, it’s okay. That’s why I’m here. They just did something, something small, sweet, but like that makes all the difference.

In talking about what Allegra perceived would help her self-efficacy grow, she identified having more experience with issues that she currently questions herself about.

She stated:

...Probably the more experience I have and the more I learn how to deal with those issues. The more I do it, the more I’ll know what to do, and then I’ll be able to do it. Just like, knowing, knowing the correct like, okay this is a problem. Knowing directly how to fix it because I’ve done it in the past and I know I can fix it.

Allegra shared an example of how her self-efficacy has developed since her student teaching because of more experience. She shared that she used to question herself constantly, but now she feels that she can accomplish what she needs to. Specifically, she stated:

I think I used to get overwhelmed quicker and I’m not overwhelmed as quickly. And I think I was more self-conscious, cause I was like, “Ah, I don’t know what I’m doing. Is this right? Is this right? Is this right?” where, every once in a while, I’ll feel like that, for the most part I’m like, “we’re okay. We can do this.”

Of interest is that Allegra described self-efficacy growing exponentially based on an awareness of competence growth. Therefore, simply noticing growth in herself as a teacher had the effect of improving her self-efficacy. She shared the following, “I can tell

that I'm growing too. The more I teach, the better I'm getting, and I like that I'm getting better." Awareness of growth also stirred her motivation to stay in teaching.

Social Persuasion. Allegra spoke about how positive feedback from others boosts her confidence. Others included a principal, a mentor teacher, colleagues, or professors (from student teaching). Allegra described the positive feedback using general phrases such as, "You're doing a really good job. That was a good lesson." and "Oh, that was really fun, that worked well." She stated, "Any praise from them helps me gain confidence.

In addition to social persuasion, Allegra talked out how much she appreciated constructive suggestions for improvement. She explained how she only received positive feedback during college practicums. Now as a teacher, she valued feedback that provided suggestions for ways she can improve her teaching practice. Specifically, she shared:

So we've been observed a bajillion times, and it's all been fine, and then [redacted principal name] observed us too and we love [redacted principal name]. We respect him so much. And he gave us a lot of "this was great, this was great" and like a couple of things we needed to work on which is normal, but, in college we didn't really get much of that. We wanted that but they were like, "nah, you're good." And it's like "no, there's more. I know there's more. I know I can be better."

Although this constructive feedback was much appreciated, it also created a level of frustration. Allegra described the tension this feedback created between what she knows best practice entails and the limitation she feels to realistically implement those practices. She explained that she feels like she is just trying to survive, and therefore is focused mainly on implementing the basics in teaching. She talked about feeling upset and frustrated with herself that she's not able to pull off all of the best practices she knows "in

her head” from college professors and observing great teachers. She reflected on this in the following words:

And it was frustrating because I knew all those things and I knew I was supposed to do them. And I didn't! And that was frustrating. And so, I know how to be a good teacher. It's all, it's all up there like, I had a good, I had good teachers that I learned from. I got to learn from [redacted]. I got to learn from some other great teachers and professors and I know how to do it, but right now since I've just started I can't put it all into practice at the moment, and that's frustrating. So he [principal] was telling me this and it's like "I knew that," I could have watched my lesson and said, "yeah I should have done that but I didn't." That makes me upset. And I could, but at the same time I can't right now, because I'm still trying to do the basics. So, I feel like I'm still trying to do survival, so I can't get into those more, you know...

To resolve this tension, Allegra talked about being patient with herself. She stated that she thinks she needs to be okay with where she is in light of where she wants to be as a teacher, by extending kindness to herself. She talked about letting go of expectations to implement best practice consistently and easily in her first-year teaching, stating, "That will be great, but not this year."

Allegra also spoke about "knowing what I'm doing" as a way to resolve the tension. She described this as a journey that takes time and practice. More specifically, she shared that the limitation she feels in survival mode has a lot to do with the fact that she is "teaching everything for the first time." Allegra explained that being able to repeat lessons would help her implement best practices more consistently and improve her self-efficacy. Therefore, a second time or second year of teaching the same curriculum and lessons would go a long way in enabling her to "know what I'm doing."

Collective Efficacy. As a new teacher, Allegra confessed that the positivity or negativity among colleagues had a significant impact on her. She shared experiences she had in schools where colleagues constantly talked negatively about the students, administrators, and their jobs. Allegra described feeling the weight of the pessimism stealing away her joyful energy. She shared that in some of her practicum or student teaching placements, these individuals were supervising or cooperating teachers for her, making it difficult to avoid or ignore them.

Allegra then contrasted these negative experiences with a school climate full of positive energy. Admitting that other people should not have such an influence on her, Allegra shared that it's simply easier for her to be positive and passionate when surrounded by like-minded teachers. She further stated that seeing a positive school community was a significant factor that drew her to apply to teach at her current school.

Handling Stress

Self-regulation. Allegra disclosed examples in which she practiced self-regulation, or “the exercise of influence over one’s own motivation, thought processes, emotional states and patterns of behavior.” The steps in this process include observing oneself, making a judgment that compares reality to one’s goal, taking action, and finally reflecting with satisfaction that one is making progress.

Allegra shared how she self-regulated her emotions when she felt stressed. In her moments of frustration, especially with classroom management and student learning stressors, Allegra shared a strategy of deep breathing she uses for herself to deal with

stress and emotions in a constructive way. She explained how she sometimes pauses a lesson and has students take deep breaths with her. At times, she has the students briefly work on quiet seatwork to give herself time to take deep breaths and refocus. She expressed that this strategy allows her to deal with frustration appropriately.

Summary

First year teaching is full of challenges. Despite seemingly difficult teaching days, Allegra was quick to add her beliefs that alongside the hard days are really great days and that variety makes the job more interesting. Although Allegra shared motivators and beliefs as internal factors, she described primarily external factors that shape her self-efficacy, including mastery experiences, social persuasion, and collective efficacy. In particular, successful experiences were the most significant factor in helping Allegra bounce back from low self-efficacy. She also spoke about awareness of growth as an important influence on self-efficacy growth. Self-regulation was the primary cognitive process Allegra described using when she felt stressed, frustrated or overwhelmed. Using this process, Allegra took teaching breaks to practice deep breathing for herself and with her students. This self-regulation of emotions enabled Allegra to press “restart” and finish a lesson with a fresh, positive perspective.

Sunny: Strong Self-Efficacy Explained After 11 YearsProfile

Teaching Biography. Declaring 11 total years of teaching, Sunny taught for two years in the states before her current nine-year longevity run at SCS. She holds a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction. Sunny has taught a variety of grade levels from 3rd grade to 8th grade as both a general classroom teacher and as an intervention specialist.

Sunny described her first teaching post as a small private school in the United States where she felt deeply valued and appreciated as a teacher. She spoke about small class sizes and sparse discipline issues. Stating that teacher appreciation from parents “was nuts” and that it felt good; Sunny recalled examples such as ample verbal encouragement from parents, receiving generous gift baskets, and walking into her room to find two dozen roses on her desk.

After her second year of teaching, Sunny transitioned to a large international school in the Dominican Republic. She described the transition as shocking and traumatic the first year, listing significant challenges as ESL learners, classroom management, and gaining students' respect. Her self-efficacy was shaken on the onset but bounced back when she “got ahold of that class” through connecting with students on a relational level. Sunny also confirmed that remembering her prior two years of teaching success helped her believe that she could be successful in the new context. Additionally, signing a multi-year contract/commitment to the school was the reason she stayed past the traumatizing

transition year, stating that she would have left otherwise. Sunny went on to be recognized by colleagues as the “Teacher of the Year” multiple times as she modeled passion for teaching, love for her students and successful teaching year after year.

Sunny spoke about herself as a life-long learner, acknowledging her need to continually grow and change in the teaching profession. At about year ten, Sunny reached a crisis point in her teaching where she felt she needed a break. The passion, love, and enjoyment of teaching began to feel like an irritation and a burden. She no longer looked forward to coming to school every morning. Knowing that in her core she did love teaching and didn’t want to leave the profession or the school community, Sunny aspired to do what she loved in a different way. Partially motivated by a desire to stay home with a new baby, Sunny requested a part-time position out of the general classroom for one year. This mini-break resulted in a renewed sense of truly wanting to teach and a confirmation that Sunny didn’t want to leave the teaching profession. When approached with an opportunity to teach in a different capacity as an intervention specialist, Sunny described feeling nervous and uncertain at first as to whether she would enjoy it and whether it would be a good fit. After a mere year in her new position, Sunny talked about having stronger teaching confidence than she ever did before as a classroom teacher. She attributed this self-efficacy spike to embracing the “fun part of teaching” without the presence of major stressors. Specifically, she identified the following self-efficacy boosting factors: 1) vicarious experiences, 2) coaching and modeling for less experienced teachers, 3) advising students on a more one-on-one level, and 4) less pressures from classroom management and general workload. In this new chapter in her teaching career,

Sunny has found heightened self-efficacy, renewed passion, and new capacity in encouraging and assisting other teachers. This cemented her belief that teachers must continually grow and change in order for their self-efficacy to remain strong. Sunny asserted her belief that stagnancy is one culprit that lowers teachers' self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy. Scoring an average of 7.75 on a scale of (low) to 9 (high), Sunny exhibited a high level of confidence in “her capability or organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 233). Sunny rated her self-efficacy level higher than the standard mean of 7.1 for this self-assessment. Sunny scored herself as having “quite a bit” of influence for student engagement (7.5) and classroom management (7.75). She rated herself the highest in instructional strategies, with (8.0) signifying she believes she has “quite a bit” or “a great deal” of influence on students. Items scored as “quite of bit” of influence included statements regarding motivating students with low interest and controlling disruptive behavior. Items in-between “quite a bit” and “a great deal” included statements about using alternative strategies, helping students value learning, and partnering with families. Items scored as “a great deal” of influence included establishing a classroom management system with different groups of students and using a variety of assessment strategies.

Motivation. Sunny described her motivation and rationale for teaching in these words, “I love it. To the depths of my bones I just, it gives me joy, it, I don’t know, it’s what I’m made to do.” She went on to explain that she feels this way the most right in the

middle of a teaching lesson when students connect with learning. She added that she also feels this way when she is doing almost anything to do with teaching, including teacher busywork such as grading papers. Specifically, she shared:

Right in the lesson, like when I'm teaching something and the kids are all getting it or connected, or even when I'm teaching them something and like able to explain it in a way they understand I get goose bumps. I'm a nerdy teacher. I just love light bulb moments, like when they get it and everyone's, you know, there's no classroom management issues everyone's on the same train we're all together and it's like "they're getting it!" ...But I mean like, I'm weird. I find joy in grading papers. I find joy in putting up bulletin boards. I just love everything about it, like I love teaching.

Positive Impact. Sunny spoke about her passion to make an impact on students' learning. In particular, she talked about how she believes she can help students be more interested and participative in learning by her efforts to make learning fun and engaging. She shared the following:

Helping them to be interested in learning... to make it fun... That's how I've always kind of seen it. Making it more interesting and fun and engaging. I think I can reach those kids who think of certain things as being boring by just making it a little more engaging.

Inspiration. In talking about people who had inspired her as a teacher, Sunny recalled teachers she had in high school and colleagues she has worked alongside. She pointed out that she gains inspiration from each teacher differently depending on the specific area of expertise she sees modeled in the teacher. Regarding her own experiences as a student, she contrasted teachers based on how well they taught and whether she enjoyed learning. Specifically, she stated, "I would say, my high school teachers taught really well. Not so much my elementary teachers, but my high school teachers did it very

well and I enjoyed learning.” In looking towards teaching colleagues for inspiration, Sunny identified specific teachers for inspiration on classroom management, relationships with students, and overall organization and competence. She shared the following:

My co-teachers often like, [redacted – teacher name] and [redacted – teacher name] are very, I’d say they have a better grasp on classroom management than I do so I just looked up to their management abilities. I would say [redacted – teacher name] relationships and counsel. So I view different teachers for different things. Oh and [redacted – teacher name] just overall. She’s got life figured out. Like, she stays on top of grading, she stays on top of management, she’s just very excellent and I don’t think a lot of people realize that until you’re in her room seeing it happen.

Beliefs About Good Teaching. Sunny shared her belief that classroom management is an essential skill in good teaching because it serves as the foundation enabling teachers to practically implement best practices. She asserted:

I think it has to be someone who has good management, because you can have all the great ideas in the world, but if you can’t manage you’re not going to be a good teacher. Like, that’s just how it works.

Sunny’s beliefs about good teaching include passion and love of the job and love for students. She stressed that this passion and love of teaching are the very factors that shape good teaching and furthermore, that good teaching is not possible without them. She explained that these tenets have the power to trump frustration and burnout. She stated:

Someone who has a passion for the job, like, that is going to drive you. I think once you lose your passion you can no longer be a teacher, like you have to be driven by that passion. In my belief system it’s that gifting... and that passion for learning more and for discovering more and reaching the students more...The love of the job is going to make you a good teacher. The love of the students is going to make you a good teacher and if you’ve gotten to the point where you’re so overwhelmed with work or irritations then just get out, like do something else, because kids have to

have teachers that love what they do, or they're going to see it, like it's going to be clear.

Efficacy Sources

Mastery Experiences. Sunny expressed her perception that her length of time in the teaching profession has been a significant factor explaining her high self-efficacy. She stated, "I feel confident... because I've done it for such a long time, so I know I can do it." Sunny defined this success in terms of effective classroom management, student learning, and engaging instruction. Although Sunny shared about initial learning curves or apprehension with transitions, she nevertheless was able to remain grounded in her belief that she "must have done something right" in the past and could do it again. This belief was based on having prior teaching experiences that proved successful. For example, when she initially moved internationally and encountered a significant learning curve with ESL students and challenging student behavior, she held on to the fact that she had two years of prior successful teaching. Therefore, her conclusion in the new challenging context was not that she couldn't teach, but rather that the new context presented different challenges, stating, "it was them, not me." In fact, Sunny disclosed that she may have left in the face of those new context challenges had she not believed she could teach based on prior experience. The combination of successful experiences and duration of time continue to strengthen Sunny's perception that she has what it takes to be successful. Her self-efficacy assessment affirms this as well, showing Sunny's belief that she has a great deal of influence regarding classroom management and instructional strategies with a wide range of student groups and contexts.

Connecting with Students. For Sunny, knowing and connecting with the students has helped her feel confident in her ability to influence students. She shared her experience in her transition year to SCS and how relationship connection with students broke through the student behavior and respect challenges that were affecting her self-efficacy. Sunny spoke about how her heart towards the students became one of genuine love and care, despite the difficult behavior they demonstrated that year. She revealed a significant moment that year in which she lost her temper with the students and then apologized. This apology resonated with the students in a special way, gaining Sunny their respect and their belief that she truly cared about them. From that moment on, the climate in the classroom improved, leading Sunny to ultimately believe that she had “gotten ahold of that class.” Specifically, she disclosed the following:

That first year, that everyone said was impossible and you’ll never love them, and they’ll never respect you and we developed a relationship and it started when I apologized to them for one day where I lost my temper. I actually told them like, “I screwed up,” and they were like “miss, no teacher has ever apologized to us ever.” And I was like, “that’s sad, because I’m sure that other teachers have said things that they shouldn’t have said” and I don’t know like, that day kind of changed... It’s not like there was a huge ginormous but little by little it changed. And so...I think, the students respected me more, and like saw that I actually cared because I was willing to say I messed up and I think teachers in the past only ever pointed the finger. Because they were a hard class, like they had a reputation, they were not...like the following year in fifth grade they would place bets on what time they could make their teacher cry by, they were just not friendly children. They were hard, but I loved them.

What Sunny learned that first year at SCS about connecting with students has continued to be a foundational component of her teaching success and confidence. During our focus group session, Sunny expressed her perception that gaining students’ respect is only difficult as a new teacher to the school. She explained that returning

teachers don't have to work as hard to gain student respect, even with new groups of students because returning teachers gain a reputation. She reflected that this positive teacher reputation among all students continues to strengthen over time.

Sunny also shared that part of her teaching efficacy in her current position was based on the fact that she previously taught many of the students she currently works with. Specifically, she stated, "I know these kids, I've taught them in [redacted] grade and now they're in [redacted – grades]. This "knowing the students" enables her to walk into a variety of classrooms and jump into co-teaching or take over teaching at the drop of a hat. She has the confidence to do this because of the relationship connection, rapport, and respect she has already established with students.

Growth Mindset. Sunny shared how her mindset of continual growth helped her keep her confidence. This mindset embraces change and new challenges as opportunities to grow and learn. Sunny contrasted this growth mindset with stagnation, explaining that growth protects teachers from becoming overwhelmed, bored, or wanting to quit. For example, a teacher with a stagnant mindset may get overwhelmed in the face of change or new challenges, whereas a teacher with a growth mindset will be motivated to learn how to adjust and change to meet the challenges. A teacher with a stagnant mindset may get bored over time, whereas a teacher with a growth mindset is genuinely interested and curious and will continually seek out self-growth and learning. Sunny made a connection between growth mindset and self-efficacy by describing how adapting makes a teacher more in tune with their students' needs. Thereby, students become more responsive to teachers who are in tune with them. Furthermore, this creates successful learning

experiences for students and successful teaching experiences for teachers. Specifically,

Sunny explained these concepts in the following words:

I love learning, like I would be totally pursuing a million masters if I had time. And I think, if you're a teacher you're a lifelong learner, and that's key. You have to keep learning. You can never be this person who is like, "I'm done". Like I said it's back to that it's not stagnant. It's growing and changing and that makes it interesting. I think if you let it stay stagnant you're going to be bored and lose your confidence... Because kids change, times change, everything changes, and so if you just choose to stay in your little "this is how I've always done it, I'm not going to change" then you're either going to get bored or overwhelmed or not be able to reach and that's going to affect your confidence for sure. 'Cause the kids won't like it, or won't be in tune with it, or it's just not going to be what they need and administration will, you know, you got to go with it, you got to!

Vicarious Experiences. Sunny talked in-depth about the value of observing other teachers and borrowing strategies from them to upgrade one's own toolkit. Sunny recalled her experience with observing other teachers in her first year at SCS. She stated that the opportunity to observe veteran teachers helped her significantly as she puzzled over the new teaching context and student learning needs that were unfamiliar to her. She shared the following:

My first year here... That was something they let the new teachers do and I think that was huge. You would get a whole day or more and they'd put a sub in for you and you would get to go especially into teachers who had been at SCS for a while and you'd just get to go watch, and I think that actually helped me my first year here a lot because I took some of their... because I didn't know, like I didn't know how to handle these ESL kids. That helped a lot.

Sunny further expressed the value of observing colleagues as an experienced teacher. She described how her current support specialist position allows for her to co-teach with many different teachers. Sunny detailed how she observed a good strategy in one

classroom from perhaps a more experienced teacher, borrows the strategy, and then models it in another classroom for perhaps a brand-new teacher. Specifically, she shared the rationale for her high self-efficacy in the particular teaching position she currently holds, stating:

I would say actually this season in... because I'm co-teaching and working with a lot, like some of the new teachers and it just. I feel more confident than I did when I taught in a classroom because I've been able to go into other teachers' classrooms and actually observe them. I'm linking what I see. Like I'm seeing good strategies in like, [redacted – teacher name] classroom for example, I've watched her and she's just amazing at managing her room and so from the observing of that all last year, that I'm now taking to [redacted – teacher name] room. Like getting to see, go into rooms and like see how to do it, and then take those and implement it.

Sunny stated that she feels that her self-efficacy benefits equally from both observing and coaching. Regarding observing colleagues, Sunny explained that her self-efficacy strengthens when she sees strategies work successfully. They may be strategies she has used previously or ones she intends to borrow. Either way, observing successful results validates the strategy as an effective teacher tool. Regarding coaching, Sunny talked about how she feels her capabilities are validated when she sees that she is able to handle things that are stressful or challenging for another teacher. She reflected on this in the following words:

Sometimes if they're having a bad day you can, I don't know, it's interesting because I feel like with [redacted – teacher name], she might be having a horrible day because it's just the first year, and actually that makes my confidence go up because then I can actually take charge of the room and can do it, which sounds horrible, but [laughs]. You know when you can be like "no I got this," like, that's actually a confidence booster, but...

Sunny echoed this sentiment again in general terms regarding any teaching colleague. She expressed that the awareness of her capabilities in comparison to others validates her self-efficacy. Hearing that another teacher is struggling reminds Sunny that she has those capabilities and prior success. She expressed these ideas in the following words:

Sometimes I think actually, when other teachers find out a teacher is struggling with management and you know you're not, it actually makes you feel like, "oh, I kinda got this, okay." Like you feel bad for them, but in a sense your confidence actually goes up, 'cause you're just like, "I got it."

Having a genuine heart to coach, mentor, and encourage other teachers, Sunny is then able to model or share strategies from her toolkit with teachers who are struggling in a particular teaching area.

Administrative Backing. Sunny spoke in-depth about the significant influence administrators have had on her self-efficacy. She shared both positive and negative examples through her experiences with multiple administrators over the years. Sunny described administrative influence as support in terms of verbal affirmation and acting as a buffer for teachers with parent and student issues. At the essence of administrative support, in Sunny's view, is knowing that an administrator "has her back" and trusts her decisions at the classroom level.

In one positive example, she reflected on a particularly hard teaching year and how support from a principal helped her get through it. Sunny had many days that particular year in which she wanted to quit. A principal consistently reiterated to her that she could do it and that the principal believed in her capability to see it through to the end of the school year. Specifically, she disclosed:

Well I mean, I was an emotional basket case that one year... and I just was done. And I mean I was in [redacted – principal name] office at least once a week crying. Saying like “I shouldn’t do this, I’m done, I shouldn’t do this,” and [the principal] just like, constantly, “No you can. I know you can.”

Sunny then explained the importance of administrative buffering with parents in the particular school context. She shared that this school community differs from other schools she has worked because there is an uncertainty of whether or not parents will support, believe, and side with teachers regarding issues with students.

Probably not so much student feedback as parent, and again it’s that whole going back to, is administration going to get on my back because this parent’s going to call them and... here more than anything. I don’t know, in the states I just knew the parents had my back and they were going to be on my side, but in this country, I don’t feel that way.

Furthermore, when there is a constant uncertainty of whether an administrator will back the teacher, Sunny stated that this leads her to continually second guess herself. This leads to her self-efficacy plummeting in the classroom. She shared an example in which she perceived pressure by administration to appease parents instead of support from administration to hold firm standards, stating:

Administration put so much pressure on us to pass all these kids that didn’t deserve to pass, and didn’t just let it happen. That pressure to make kids show something that’s not true or to handle a situation in a way that’s like... but you’re not in here, you don’t see it... To not get the support you need.

She shared how this affected her colleagues and her own self-efficacy, stating, “then you’re second guessing everything you do, like do I actually hold this kid to these standards or do I just lower the bar so that my life is easier.” Sunny explained that she believes that lack of support/backing can be attributed to an administrator’s lack of

understanding about the situation at the classroom level. She stated that she believes administrators are well intentioned but may be out of touch with the realities of the classroom when listening to parent complaints. She expressed the following:

Like, “you [the administrator] are in your little air-conditioned office, you [the administrator] have no idea.” Like, you’re not in the reality enough to know... and I think administration is always good intentioned. I don’t ever think any of the administration we’ve had were bad intentioned, but they’re just not in the situation enough to get a reality touch.

Sunny went on to share that her colleagues and herself have felt frustrated and discouraged when they have perceived administrators to side with parents and students over teachers. Sunny described this in terms of trusting an administrator to not bend to a parents’ demands, but rather hold all students to the same academic and behavioral standards, regardless of their parents’ position on the board, generous donations to the school, wealth, or position in the community. She disclosed that she has seen what she described as ‘catering to parents with clout’, and how that deeply influences her trust in the administrator. She shared that from a teachers’ perspective, this “betrays the teachers’ confidence” and “frustrates teachers.”

This relationship of trust between the administrator and teacher is a delicate one that can result in teachers leaving a school. Sunny disclosed how prior colleagues had confided in her that this perceived breach of trust was their deciding factor in leaving the school. She stated, “[redacted – administrator name] is the reason that [redacted] left. Yes. Moved back to the states, because they just couldn’t handle any more of the [pressure].”

Transitions. Moving from one school to another or changing positions within a school had significant influence on Sunny's self-efficacy. In one example, the transition initially lowered her self-efficacy because the new teaching context required a steep learning curve. She shared the following story about her transition from teaching in the states to teaching at SCS, stating:

I was second-guessing everything. Ugh, I mean I would sit on the floor of my apartment and cry. I would come home from school call my parents and just cry and be like "I don't know if I should do this... I'm never gonna earn their respect. I don't know how to reach them. I can't talk to them, I don't understand them, my kids speak Spanish."

Sunny shared that her self-efficacy eventually went back up as she "got ahold of that class" by building relationships with students.

In another example, Sunny shared how a transition raised her self-efficacy. She identified a number of factors that contributed to this efficacy boost. She spoke about the new opportunities to observe colleagues, stating:

I felt more confident in [redacted] than I did in my own classroom because I've been able to pick up all these strategies of all these people around me. Like getting to watch other teachers is valuable.

Sunny also talked about the nature of the new position as more of an advisory role to students and coaching role to some colleagues. She discussed having different responsibilities that she perceived as less stressful. This combination of a different role and different responsibilities fit Sunny like a glove. She expressed how this good fit gave her stronger self-efficacy and enjoyment in teaching again:

It made me more confident. Because I had more joy, I enjoyed it more, I was able to like...I wasn't as stressed. Because there isn't that like, you must be here at eight o'clock and these are your kids and, it was more a support. I feel like more like an advisor, kind of like a mentor. I do feel

more like a mentor teacher. It just changes how you feel, it's not stressful because you have responsibilities, but I don't feel like the load is there...it takes that stress off of you because I'm in there pushing in, but I'm not necessarily the manager of the class... It's like the fun part of teaching.

Sunny shared how she had reached a point in her teaching before the transition where she didn't look forward to teaching everyday anymore. The transition to a new position had the effect of breathing fresh new energy and excitement into Sunny for teaching again. She stated, "Like, whereas now when I come to school I'm very joyful. Like, I love coming to work."

Handling Doubts. Even a teacher with high self-efficacy may experience "bad teaching days" or doubts about themselves. Sunny was able to reflect on these moments and shed light on how she brings herself back to strong self-efficacy and joy in teaching. Sunny described a bad teaching day for her as a day when management techniques don't work, and even well-planned lessons turn into nightmares. Sunny shared the doubts that pass through her mind on those "bad days" and how self-efficacy can temporarily take a nosedive to "negative twenty". On days like these, Sunny candidly disclosed that she has questioned and doubted herself with thoughts like, "I never should have become a teacher." or "Why did I ever become a teacher?" or "Is this the right place for me?"

This level of doubt, to where a teacher questions their very choice to be in the teaching profession, may seem shocking to some. However, I found it to be a common finding in my interviews with teachers at all different stages in their careers. It was a finding in my pilot study interviews in a different teaching context and is also something I have experienced myself as a teacher at different points in my own career. The great

value in discussing this phenomenon openly is to understand that it is common among teachers. Furthermore, there are effective methods that some teachers use to bounce themselves back. Sunny was able to offer many strategies that have helped her or colleagues to bounce back from these low dips in self-efficacy. She identified 1) verbal affirmation from others, 2) reminding oneself of prior success, 3) reminding oneself of calling to teach, 4) experience of knowing one will bounce back, 5) analyzing the length of the low point.

Sunny recommended seeking out affirmation and encouragement from co-teachers or administrators. Personally, she shared examples of going to a principal or a family member in moments of doubt. Her experience in seeking out affirmation from a principal during one school year when she wanted to quit proved to be so helpful that Sunny claims it was a significant reason why she kept going. Sunny also spoke about her experiences as a mentor teacher when colleagues came to her for encouragement. She shared:

I think going to your co-teachers is helpful because you can be like “remind me why I did this” ...I do think sometimes you do have to get affirmation from other people and be like, “should I keep doing this, like”...I have heard other teachers do that. They come to me sometimes and are like, “should I keep going?”

At another level, Sunny described a method of reminding oneself of specific prior experiences or decisions. In one example, Sunny talked about remembering prior success by, “looking back on good classes you’ve had or good days.” In another example, she talked about bringing to mind one’s decision to become a teacher. She stated:

Going back to your calling and your gifting. Reminding yourself “yes I am gifted at this, I’m called to this”... Like, I know I’m called to teach, it’s in my bones.

With time and experience, Sunny realized that ups and downs in teaching are an integral part of the teaching profession. Instead of viewing dips in self-efficacy as a negative element, she described it as an opportunity for healthy change and growth. In essence, Sunny explained that the teaching profession, by default, demands continual change and growth. Part of growth involves the bumps along the way that motivate change. Without efficacy “always going up or going down”, the teacher and their instruction become stagnant. Sunny emphasized that both positive and negative change can inspire growth.

Another approach that Sunny learned through time and experience was the understanding that a bad day is usually just one day. Although it may seem quite dark, she expressed that from her experience, it is usually just a moment in time that turns around the next day. This sentiment was echoed by other participants who described reminding oneself that “bad days” are just temporary “moments.” Sunny shared the following, “Sometimes it’s just a bad day so everything’s going to look black... I know it’s usually just a day or an evening.”

Sunny further clarified that she made a distinction between a discouraging teaching day from time to time and doubts that last for months on end. She stated:

I think it’s also like yeah, how long is that feeling continuing. If it’s one day, if you’re having that feeling for months on end then something...and that might be it too.

She shared from her own experience that she has handled continual doubts differently than “daily” or “short-term” doubts. In one instance, the doubt had reached a crisis point in which Sunny felt it necessary to make a change in her job position and responsibilities in order to keep her passion for teaching. The follow section describes how Sunny navigated this crisis point and actually achieved stronger self-efficacy on the other side of the transition.

Crisis Points. Sunny disclosed how she reached a crisis point as she approached ten years of teaching. She clarified that she had an easy class that particular year, so the crisis wasn’t due to a particularly difficult teaching task. Rather, the crisis arose out of her internal feelings of the whole teaching task as a burden. She stated:

But, then that one year, like I said when it started to kinda be like it was continuing where it was just like, I don’t love this. I’m not thrilled at the idea of leading another morning meeting... And, I had a great class. I had a great class that year. I had the current seventh graders and they were awesome. So it’s not like I had crazy behavior issues, like I just. It had gotten to be burdensome. I needed, I needed to be able to do what I loved but in a different way.

She described how frustration and irritation become stronger than her passion and love for teaching. She realized that she was not as effective and needed to make a change. She shared:

I was getting to the point at year ten, I guess it would have been, that I just, it was too much. Like I was just done. I don’t think I could be a classroom teacher effectively anymore because I had grown irritated. And so it’s like, a passion and a love that’s bigger than the irritations. Because when the irritations of the kids start to become stronger than the passion it’s time to switch it up or change.

The crisis point was such that Sunny admitted that a change was necessary for her to remain in teaching, stating, “If I hadn’t been able to get out of teaching [redacted] full time I don’t think I would be teaching right now.” Sunny explained that she is still in teaching today because she was able to make some changes in her job responsibilities. She spoke about the exhaustion, burden of responsibilities, and no longer enjoying teaching that led up to her decision to request a part-time position for a year. She reflected:

Because after ten years it just gets exhausting, and I think sometimes teachers just have to switch jobs or make it so there’s less responsibility. Take a break and then go back to it. So I think because I switched it up and like listened to my inner heart that was telling me “you’re not happy anymore. You’re coming to school and it’s a burden, that’s not the way you should feel.”

After a year of part-time teaching, Sunny was refreshed and ready to go back. Taking a break had the effect of confirming her passion and love for teaching, as well as her desire to remain in the teaching profession. She shared:

But I was ready to go back, so ready. Like, and that’s another way I knew I wasn’t done like, after that year where I was hungry to get back in the classroom... And I did take a break essentially... And it wasn’t like take a break, “oh I like this.” It was “Please get me back in the classroom! Like please!”

Instead of going back to her former position, an administrator recommended that Sunny move to a support specialist position that had very different teaching responsibilities. Sunny knew she wanted to stay in teaching but needed a change in her workload. She expressed, “I know I was tired of the position but not the job. I know that I still love teaching because in [redacted] I’m teaching essentially, and I love that, and I love helping students...” Therefore, Sunny decided to try the new position because

although she was excited to get back to full-time teaching, she knew she had burned out in her former position. Sunny confessed that her real reason for initially accepting the new position was based on work-life balance with a new baby at home. She shared:

I mean honestly the real reason why I switched positions was because I knew I couldn't handle all the grading and the prepping with a kid. I can't tell you if I would still be teaching a full classroom if I hadn't had [the baby], I don't know, but the way I was starting to feel I needed a break, I don't know, but it was driven by the fact that I just couldn't keep up with all the work and a baby.

Sunny expressed her uncertainty and nostalgia with the transition. She essentially left an area of expertise that had been successful for close to a decade for a completely new arena of teaching. She disclosed the following:

But, I was nervous to make that change. I was really nervous and that first year actually I was kind of jealous at the beginning of the year to see them in the new building and like, not having my own room to set up. And, so it was very hard at first. Right now it's, it's fine, but it was a hard transition, like I didn't know that I would like it. But, I took it because I was like, I can't keep doing what I'm doing, so let me try something else.

The courage to request the part-time change and to accept a significant position change came from Sunny's internal love for her students and the school community. Although both transitions worked out for the better, Sunny didn't have confidence for success when she initially made the change. In the midst of the crisis, Sunny reminded herself of her calling to teach, which guided her to take some unique risks before leaving the teaching profession altogether. She shared, "I love my kids and I love this place I wasn't ready to let it go yet. Or stop teaching all together."

Sunny further expressed her belief that continual growth as a teacher does require change. Sunny reflected on how her own experience changing teaching positions helped her to be effective at teaching again. She stated:

I don't think any teacher could be successful staying in the exact same spot, teaching that exact same thing like their whole career. I think you do reach a point where you need to take a break. Even like changing from [redacted – position] to [redacted – position] was enough of a change that I, I feel like I'm good at it again.

Summary

Teaching over time can begin to wear on a teacher's joy and passion for the profession. Sunny explained her viewpoint of the teaching profession as a living organism that needs to continually change and grow in order to not become stagnant. When Sunny encountered crisis points, she was able to bounce back through a combination of internal and external factors. External factors included mastery experiences, connecting with students, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and job position change. Internal factors included growth mindset and mental models of prior success. Sunny revealed how her mindset, perspective, and thinking guided her to embrace changes in ways that enabled her to remain in teaching, achieve greater self-efficacy, and regain her passion and love for teaching. This lends helpful insights for other teachers when they encounter crisis points, as well as administrators when they encounter teachers experiencing crisis points.

Cheryl: The Veteran TeacherTeaching Profile

Teaching Biography. In her sixteenth year of teaching, Cheryl brings experience from stateside teaching, a local community school in the Dominican Republic, and her current position at an international school in the Dominican Republic. With the original intention to teach at the college level, Cheryl completed a bachelor's degree in Literature and started a master's in literature. However, after coming to the conclusion that teaching high school would be a better fit with what she truly wanted to do, Cheryl abandoned the college teaching goal. She worked in business for a while and completed a master's in teaching. Cheryl then taught high school English and Literature in a school in the States for five years, where she acted as a department chair. She then moved internationally to work with a non-profit mission organization in the Dominican Republic. There she taught three years in a small private community school, while also teaching English classes in the local community. Remaining in the Dominican Republic, Cheryl then changed schools to work in her current position as a high school English/Literature teacher in a large international school. Cheryl has worked part time in her current position for the past nine years.

Self-Efficacy. Scoring an average of 8.1 on a scale of 1 (low) to 9 (high), Cheryl exhibited a high level of confidence in "her capability or organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 233). The standard mean for this self-assessment is

7.1, signifying that Cheryl rated her self-efficacy level one whole standard deviation above the norm. It should be noted that this high level of self-efficacy is specific to the particular curriculum and student make-up within her current school context. Cheryl scored herself equally high in areas of student engagement (8.2), instructional strategies (8.2), and classroom management (8.0). The items that she scored as having “quite a bit” of influence were “How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?” and “How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?” The items she scored as an 8, meaning half way between “quite a bit” and “a great deal,” included a combination of capabilities in classroom management, assessment, differentiation, and partnering with families. Cheryl scored herself a 9, as having “a great deal” of influence on managing different groups of students, crafting good questions, and helping students value learning and believing in themselves.

Motivation. Cheryl’s motivation for teaching is her love and enjoyment of the interactions with students, energy in the classroom, and seeing student growth. Having experience in a career outside of teaching, Cheryl readily disclosed her view of the classroom as having a special energy that is unique from that found in other places or professions. She stated that she loves to interact with students, get to know them, and “help them to see that they can do more than they thought they could do.”

Positive Impact. The positive impact Cheryl believes she has had on her students’ learning is empowering them to become more confident and “trust themselves more.” Cheryl’s goal for her students every year is that they would be able to “do something they

thought they couldn't do at the beginning of the year." She further shared that she would be satisfied if she observed her students achieving this at least once throughout the school year. She shared one example of helping students learn to complete a research paper, stating:

I've seen them, for example, with the research paper many students come in terrified about doing this research paper. I walk them through it. I break the steps down. I do conferencing; individual conferences with every student throughout. And at the end, they've done it, and they often look back, and they're surprised. "Wow, that wasn't as bad as I thought." And so, it's often through that. I've seen them grow in their writing ability, their ability to express themselves, and to relate what we're reading to their own lives.

Inspiration. The inspiration to become a teacher developed during Cheryl's high school experience through the formidable influence of a tenth grade English teacher. Cheryl described hating English because she couldn't figure out grammar and kept failing grammar quizzes. Although she loved to read and understood what she was reading, Cheryl was frustrated with grammar and writing. This particular teacher helped Cheryl strengthen difficult learning areas and be successful. She shared the following:

My high school English teacher. Tenth grade. She's the reason I became a teacher. Mrs. [redacted]. I hated English. I loved to read. I couldn't figure grammar out. And my grade was always just okay, because I would bomb grammar quizzes... I hate grammar quizzes... and (laughs) and I just couldn't figure it out. And she was the first teacher who didn't just let me not do well. And, or just, she could see that I could understand what I was reading, and she wanted to help to get me to figure out how I could write about what I was reading. And I remember I rewrote my Scarlet Letter essay for her, I think three times. Might be why I really don't like The Scarlet Letter today. But I got it up to an A, and I was amazed that I could do that.

Cheryl went on to share that many things she does as a teacher can be traced back to her experience with her high school teacher.

And I see a lot of things that I do, like I allow students the chance to rewrite; if I see a student get frustrated with their writing, then I talk to them individually. I wouldn't say I catch every student, and I'm aware of that because she was aware of that with me.

In another example, Cheryl spoke about a teaching colleague who had profoundly influenced the kind of teacher she aspired to be. While still in her first five years of teaching, Cheryl was mesmerized by this veteran teacher of 25 years. She described the following:

I observed one of the teachers who had been teaching for twenty-five years, and I just sat in awe, and went, "when I grow up, I want to be you." She was just, it was seamless, and unhurried, and yet deep, and... I was just, like I would usually go into observations for half an hour and I sat for the ninety minutes in her class because I just wanted to watch.

Beliefs About Good Teaching. Cheryl believes good teachers know their content, can express the content clearly, and show genuine care for students. She shared the following:

I think a teacher needs to be knowledgeable in their content, but also needs to be able to express that clearly. And also needs to let the students know how much they care about them. That it's more than just the content.

Efficacy Sources

Mastery Experiences. In line with Cheryl's belief that good teachers know their content, Cheryl shared examples of how her self-efficacy lifted or lowered depending on the level of mastery she felt with the specific curriculum she was charged to implement.

She talked about the first time she was asked to teach in a curriculum area that was different from her focus in college. She shared how she was “not terribly confident” about her teaching the first year with that particular content. However, with five years of experience teaching this area of curriculum, Cheryl felt confident in saying, “yeah, I can do that” when accepting a teaching position in another school that required teaching with this content specialty.

However, even with this sense of mastery with the teaching content, Cheryl’s heightened self-efficacy was challenged in the new teaching context with ESL students. The new challenge became apparent as Cheryl’s new students were not able to produce the same level of reading and writing as her students in her prior school. Cheryl remembered being “really surprised” that her new students spoke fluent English and engaged deeply in class discussions but struggled significantly in reading and writing. As she began to understand her ESL students, she figured out how to adjust her instruction to help them be successful with the content. These adjustments included “rewording and modifying my assignments and activities, making sure core knowledge was retained, but making them more manageable.” She also learned to plan approximately twice as much time for student to complete some assignment.

Cheryl also talked about work she put into creating and revising curriculum as something that helped her feel confident. She explained that this investment and curriculum work helps her feel that it’s a good curriculum and that there is appropriate differentiation for supporting, yet challenging students. Specifically, she stated, “I know I have good things I’m trying to teach my students that challenge them, but not to the point

where they want to give up. Where they feel like they actually can be successful.” Cheryl further stated that she feels more confident as she sees her students be successful. She explained that seeing student success is what helps her know that her teaching is effective. In these examples, Cheryl identified both knowledge in the content and knowing how to empower students to be successful as important factors for her self-efficacy.

Relational Trust & Social Persuasion. In discussing things that help her self-efficacy improve, Cheryl talked about the importance of administrative behaviors that demonstrate support and trust. Specifically, she spoke about how feedback from principals boosts her self-efficacy and helps her teaching to improve. She also reflected on her sentiments of being encouraged and trusted when administrators approved resources without asking Cheryl for explanations. Specifically, she disclosed:

And, really pretty much as long as it's reasonable (laughs) if there's a resource I want, then it gets approved. I don't ask for a lot, but an example, I wanted to change the text of [redacted] that we use for the [redacted] class... I wanted to differentiate that to make that one more challenging.... And I wanted to purchase [redacted] and just really expand that unit, and it was approved without any... I didn't have to explain. And so, that was really encouraging, and it showed that they trust me in what I want to do in the class.

Handling Challenges

Cheryl shared a number of pressures, stressors, and teaching challenges and how she intentionally manages each issue. The primary pressure and stressor was time, including both limited time to stay on top of the workload and limited class time with students to cover curriculum. Cheryl talked about her main teaching challenge as

technology, and particularly how it is used for plagiarism. The strategies Cheryl identified as ways to manage stress included 1) persistence and consistency, 2) adjusting instruction, 3) seeking advice, and 4) intentional work-life balance. These challenges and strategies are presented below.

Persistence and Consistency. One significant teaching challenge for Cheryl has been students' use of technology to plagiarize assignments. Cheryl shared her frustration that copying from the internet for writing projects is normal for students, and yet fighting to make it not acceptable in her classroom. In discussing how she handles this frustration and challenge, Cheryl spoke about consistently holding all students accountable and keeping at it. She shared the following:

I just keep at it with my students and try to be persistent in their grading... fair, but persistent. For example, today, I handed something back that was a formative assessment. Uh, and I had several students who copy and pasted, and didn't put quotation marks, they'd given me the source, but they didn't put quotation marks. I took points off; I didn't treat it as plagiarized assignment, and I dealt with that individually with them. And I told them, "This is serious. If you did this in the future, and then turned it into an essay, you're going to get a zero on this essay. So we need to stop it at this level." And I kind of... have to be consistent with it.

Adjusting Instruction. Regarding time constraints, Cheryl also spoke in depth about feeling stress with short class periods. She discussed the differences in her experiences with block scheduling and short daily classes. Even though she expressed that she now "understands the purpose for it" and students do better seeing her every day, she asserted that the scheduling has affected her stress level. This stress is due to Cheryl's awareness that she can't cover the content required in the amount of time given. She also

noted that the scheduling makes classes feel like they are over after they have barely begun.

Cheryl further discussed how she manages this challenge by staying aware of her instructional pace, checking on student understanding, and making adjustments to lessons, often times mid-lesson. Specifically, she shared what she does when she realizes she is feeling stressed about getting everything covered, stating:

Probably... we're in too hurried of a pace. And sometimes I have to adjust my lesson when we're mid-lesson, and be, "okay, we're not going to get through it all today." Because I can tell that we're losing them, and it's more important that we understand what we're doing as opposed to that we get everything done...My first year teaching, I did not have that perspective.

Cheryl further explained how advice from a college professor helped her to first make this shift in perspective. After observing Cheryl during a teaching internship, the professor talked to her about slowing down and checking that students are engaged and tracking along instead of stubbornly plowing to the end of the lesson at any cost. She shared this story:

I'll never forget the first time I was observed, and I sat down with... it was one of my professors who came in to observe me, because it was in my internship, like my forty-hour internship. And he said, "Well, here's my thing. Here's what I think. I think you got a lesson, and you're going to get through that lesson no matter what." And he said, "We need to slow that down. And look at... we need to be taking regular checks. And are they tracking with you? And you know what, if you don't get it all done today, then you do it tomorrow." And so that was great advice.

Despite her awareness of this issue and her initial perspective shift, Cheryl shared the challenge of staying true to this best practice in one school context. This particular school set pacing guide expectations that Cheryl internalized as pressure to cover a

certain amount of the content. She stated, “And I would say I still had that mentality because the school I worked in, I was given an expectation...of what I had to cover in a year, and so I felt a lot of stress about that.”

In addition to the pressure from externally set school expectations, Cheryl shared that at times she was the one who generated the pressure to cover a certain quantity of content, particularly in regard to curriculum units that she had designed herself. She reflected on an experience in a different school context that had less external pacing guide expectations, stating, “It's a lot more open [redacted – school], so I feel I probably put some of that stress on myself because I created this curriculum, and so, we're going to get through it.”

Social Persuasion. In talking about experiences when she has doubted her abilities as a teacher, Cheryl shared an example of being challenged by a student and thinking, “Wow! I don't know what to do with that at this particular moment.” Being that the administrator was observing the class when the issue with the student came up, Cheryl met with the administrator later to talk about the lesson. Cheryl reflected that she felt really supported by this principal in problem solving together. She felt like she “got some good support on it and ways to handle unexpected situations like that one” for future reference.

Affective States. The most significant factor that has ever caused Cheryl to consider leaving the teaching profession is the tension she has felt with a teaching

workload that can utterly consume and monopolize a teacher's whole life outside of the teaching day. She spoke of reaching a place of burn-out, stating:

I was just tired. Because, I mean, I had a hundred and fifty students and (laughs) and it was just a lot with essays. I taught all levels, I taught... we were, had four different levels. Students with learning differences... we didn't support a lot of learning differences, but I had, we had those in one class. And I really loved working with them. And, then I also had the honors kids, and I also taught in the [redacted] program. And so it was really varied, but it was a lot of work to keep up with.

Cheryl shared an experience of leaving this school that she absolutely loved and didn't want to leave to teach in a different context and at a more diminished scale. She clarified that her motivation for leaving the particular school was not the actual burnout, but rather a sense of calling to something different. Cheryl explained that she wanted teaching to remain part of the new focus and emphasis she felt called to without letting it monopolize her entire life. Specifically, she stated, "I didn't want to leave teaching behind... but I also didn't want it to consume my life the way it had in those first five years." Now as a mother who treasures extra time to spend with a young daughter, Cheryl insists on remaining at part-time because she know she can't keep the work level up that was characteristic of prior teaching experiences. Specifically, she shared:

Well, when I was teaching in the States, I was full-time, and I felt like I didn't have any kind of work-life balance. And so, I mean, I didn't want to leave the school I was teaching at... I loved that school... but I also felt that God was leading me into ministry. And so, when I came down, while I taught, it was at a much-diminished scale, and I felt that I need that time to recover and then when I came here, I mean, they asked me to go full-time, and I kept saying no. Because I know that I can't keep that up, that work level up. And particularly now that I have a daughter. I want to have that time...

Cheryl described the pressure she still feels with her workload and the limited time to “get all that I need to get done”. Regarding her current workload, she feels that she works closer to full-time in practice than the technical “part-time” hours allotted in her schedule. Cheryl was quick to express that she didn’t know if she always handled the pressure of time and workload well. However, she spoke in-depth about the intentional, proactive goal setting she has done for the past three years to try to create a better work-life balance. She discussed setting aside part of the weekend to not do any schoolwork. Cheryl further described her evaluation of her progress towards this goal over three years. Specifically, she shared:

I don't know that I handle it as well as I could. My goal for my work-life balance for the past two years has been to do a true Sabbath. Actually, the last three years. And I did it the first year because I was realistic about it, and then last year, I didn't... I fell into working on Sundays just because I had fallen so far behind. And I'm attempting it again this year... So far, we're okay (laughs)! But yeah, just time to get all that I need to get done, there's a lot of reading to do. So... And honestly, I don't know how a full-time teacher does it. I'm part-time. And I feel like I work full-time.

Cheryl’s example shows how a highly confident teacher faced workload burnout and considered leaving teaching altogether at one point. Through a process of changing school contexts and reducing her teaching time and workload, Cheryl has been able to meld together her loved teaching profession and living a balanced, less stressed life. Though the seemingly overbearing workload was not a motivation for the transition nor a factor that influenced her self-efficacy level as a teacher, it did act as a major stressor that resulted in Cheryl feeling “tired” and mentally entertaining the idea of leaving the profession. It was through setting boundaries and intentionally blocking out a non-work day each week that Cheryl has found more balance.

Themes

The participants' rich and vivid descriptions provided the basis for the themes describing the factors and cognitive processes involved in teacher self-efficacy development. The themes were determined through a cross case analysis of the interview and focus group transcripts, memo notes, focus group summaries, and case study profiles. This cross-case analysis integrated emerging themes from all individual and focus group experiences to construct a composite description that is representative of the participants as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). The focus group transcripts and summaries revealed participants' thinking about factors that support their self-efficacy. Focus group summaries highlighted significant distinctions among new teachers, mid-range teachers, and veteran teachers regarding the perceptions, factors, and cognitive processes contributing to their self-efficacy. Individual transcripts and case study profiles provided in-depth understanding of factors that act to preserve and reinforce self-efficacy. They also revealed a self-efficacy development process and cognitive processes within self-efficacy development. This analysis revealed overarching themes, which are organized by research question and described with maximum reference to participants' own words. Therefore, the following represents a "universal description" or "composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Question One:

How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?

The participants' rich and vivid descriptions provided the basis for the themes describing the factors and cognitive processes involved in teacher self-efficacy development. From the focus groups and interviews, five themes emerged to describe the factors that shape self-efficacy, including: connection, support, knowledge & growth, balance, and gratification. In this section, themes are described and direct quotes from participants are presented to maintain their original meanings.

Theme One: Connection

The theme of connection with students emerged as participants, as a whole, continually referred to the importance of building relationships with students as a prominent factor that shaped their overall teaching efficacy. Specifically, teachers discussed relationships as a foundation for all of teaching. Teachers spoke about building relationships through expression of care, getting to know students, and interaction. Teachers went on to share stories of the powerful impact relationships have had on students, as well as the many benefits of establishing relationships with students and families over the course of many years in a school community.

Relationships as the Foundation. The participants spoke in-depth about their love for students and love for working with youth in general. Participants talked about coming to terms with the primary importance of relationships. Jane, a teacher in her 13th year,

reflected back to an earlier teaching experience in which her students placed great value on a token representation of the relationship between teacher and student. She shared,

And then there were a couple other situations where I had taken a picture with the individual students one year. They kept it. That was a treasured possession. And I was like, wow. And so realizing it really is all about the relationships that you build during the year.

Mary, a teacher in her 9th year, shared her experience of shifting her perspective from loving her content first to loving students as the first priority. She spoke about changing her thinking after developing relationships with students and getting to know them. She detailed,

I think probably when I started teaching it was because I loved the content, and as I have continued teaching, I see that that is definitely backwards. And I have grown to love my students more... And so I think it's most important to love the students. And then I think that they love the content because of that relationship. So, I think that has definitely changed in my thinking since I started teaching... I think my first year, I was definitely stuck in that love of content, and students, because I didn't understand them as much, and didn't understand what they were able to understand, that kind of frustrated me. And as I got to know them better. And my first couple years I taught the same group... I looped with them, essentially, so I think that helped me to get to know them and love them for who they are, and then content came in a secondary position.

Showing You Care. The teachers discussed the importance of showing students that they genuinely care about them. This attitude and act of caring was viewed as a main element in developing relationship and rapport with students. Cheryl stated that good teachers “let the students know how much they care about them. That it's more than just the content.” Jane echoed these thoughts by stating that caring about students is caring for them as whole individuals, not just about their learning.

I think one of the first things that comes to mind is a genuine care and concern for the students, not just their academic growth, but their personal growth too.

Jane and others continued to express that caring about students looks like “loving them” and “pouring into them all year.” Allegra spoke about showing care by how the teacher treats students. She expressed that treating students with appreciation and respect is an important aspect towards building relationships with students.

Sometimes, it may be difficult to show love or care for students, especially when they may demonstrate challenging behavior in the classroom. Participants shared their stories of having students or classes that were especially difficult to show genuine care. Sunny shared her story about having a difficult class and how she was able to connect with them and gain their respect by being honest and transparent with them. She shared how everything started to shift for the better the day she apologized to the whole class for losing her temper. The wall between Sunny and her students started to break down as the students received the apology as a message that Sunny really cared about them.

Reese talked about consistently showing care for students over time. She explained that she doesn’t expect to see immediate, overnight results. Rather, she understands that building relationships of trust can take time, particularly with older students. However, she sees the value in genuinely caring for students and persistently working at building relationships with them.

Honestly, it’s for the kids, and I know for me, it’s just been a process, building those relationships. Middle school is hard. They don’t just run up to you and give you a hug and love you because you’re the teacher... that’s not the case. So, it takes a long time to build those relationships. But I just, I truly care about these students.

Knowing Students. Teachers expressed the importance of flexibility in making individual or group adjustments based on knowing students. Dee, a second-year teacher, shared the very intricate ways in which she observes her students to get to know them and how she uses her understanding to make adjustments for individual students. Dee clarified that this process is a continual, daily journey that requires a high level of flexibility. She explained that it's impossible to know every day what issues students will bring to class. Whether academic or social/emotional concerns, Dee shared that she constantly had to think outside the box to ensure that all students could access learning.

It's about going into knowing that... you never know one hundred percent what your students are coming to the table with. Whether it's like, a day, a week of something has happened, or whether it's like, a student who is great in all the classes, but then there's like one subject area, or there's one time of day. So just, kind of like you have, like your box of ideas, but knowing that it's not always going to fit into one of the compartments of that box. And you have to be able to sometimes, deviate a little bit, without changing your like, core.

Kayla, a special's teacher, discussed getting to know students as a group and the importance of flexibility among different classes. She shared that she has used trial and error to learn how to best support each group of students. She voiced:

Well, maybe for this class, like, sitting on the carpet doesn't work. And so like changing it, and having them sit in the tables during the story time and seeing that for those kids, that worked a lot better. And so being flexible and even though it's more work for us in the sense that we have to change our routine and we're not just being able to do the same thing for all four of the classes, like finding out what works for each group of students.

Similar to other participants, Jane, a classroom teacher, also spoke about the importance of flexibility in getting to know each new group of students from year to year.

She shared how she differentiates classroom routines based on her understanding of what inspires, motivates, and supports students. She expressed the following:

Being okay with, wow, my last year's class was really musical. They loved having music on, and we did everything to music, and I tried it the next year, and it was not working! And they needed to move, they needed activity. We walked around the class as monkeys sometimes, just as a lesson, and that go that energy up. So, being okay with, almost thinking outside the box.

Jane also disclosed that the level of flexibility she operates with currently, after many years of teaching, was a learning process for her. She described coming to terms with being “okay” with making changes and adjustments based on knowing what students need.

In getting to know students, Mary shared a powerful resource she utilizes to kick-start understanding students before she even meets them or to gain outside perspective to fully understand students. She noted:

I think it's also important to recognize that we don't do this in isolation. That we are part of a school community and as part of that school community, I have access to their previous teachers, you know, what works, what didn't. You know, the behavior issues, you know, the academic challenges, and access to [redacted -teacher] personnel who are able to come along aside me and work with those students. I mean, this year, the [redacted – students] group has been with the same teacher for five years. So she [teacher] knows them far better than I will get to know in one year. So just to rely on those resources and, using that to help students I think is way important.

Interacting with Students. Teachers referred to interaction as a way to connect with students on a personal level. Rita expressed how she jokes with her students as a way for her students to know her as a person. Jane shared how she breaks off from the regular teaching routine at times to do learning activities that she knows her students

absolutely love, such as read-alouds or reading outside. Jane elaborated that this is her way of finding balance with the rigors of academic expectations by connecting with students in a different way. She expressed the following about changing up routines:

It shows the kids the excitement I have and that I am enjoying them. And I don't know if I would have as good of a rapport with them if I didn't do that with them. If I didn't stop and say, I'm going to enjoy you. We're going to have fun together. Something that I enjoy and that you enjoy... I think that makes a huge difference in how you relate to your class and also how they relate to you.

Relationships of Lasting Impact. Teachers emphasized the powerful influence of relationships to impact students' lives. Some participants shared stories of experiences they had as students with teachers that made a lasting impact on their lives. Allegra shared the following about an elementary teacher who changed her life:

I know my life has been changed by teachers, so I hope one day to do the same for some of my students... In second grade I had a really great teacher. I think she helped me kind of come out of my shell and start enjoying school for the first time in my life. So I think she made a big difference in my life... so that was huge for me.

Reese also shared her story of being profoundly impacted by a college professor. She stressed that it was the relationship this teacher developed with students that resulted in students being willing to work really hard. Reese stated:

I'd go above and beyond just because it was for her. And I wanted it for myself and I saw the purpose in what I was doing, and I also saw how much she was trying to pour into us. But she also related with us so well, and cared about us, and invested in us. She was good; she was hard. But I really loved her.

Jane voiced her story of building a relationship with an elementary student who struggled with classroom behavior expectations. Jane shared her confidence that the relationship she established with the student made a lasting impact in the students' life.

We started out the year on a very rough foot, the student and I. We went through a whole different behavior plans and stuff. And my concern was for her, but she couldn't see that. And so, I showed her that I still cared for her deeply and wanted the best for her, but I still held her to boundaries... I would say, "hey (student's name) love you!" as she was walking out the door. She would say, "don't say that" and would cover her ears as she went out the door... One day, she said it back to me and she was, "ah, I didn't mean to say it". I was like, ya!"

Jane continued on to share how all of her efforts to connect with this student paid off at the end of the year. Jane realized that it was the relationship she forged that made all the difference, stating, "I could tell that our relationship had changed. That she knew that I cared for her... so I look back and I go, yeah, I'm pretty sure I made a difference in her life."

Similar to other teachers, Reese shared a story of helping a student gain confidence in herself. As with the other participants, she emphasized the value of the teacher-student relationship in making a lasting impact on the student. Specifically, she stated:

There was a student that I worked with last semester, and she was definitely on the lower end. And so I pulled her and we met once a week outside of class. And I think just building that one-on-one relationship. I kind of put her more at ease and gave her that desire, gave her that confidence that she could do it.

Reese further clarified that relationship building with students is comprised of caring about the student as a whole person, including their academic and personal concerns. She shared that in respect to academics, she believes she can "set the track of a student or put

it back on course.” Regarding students’ personal lives, she spoke about helping students with a sport they love or lending an ear with family issues.

In the same way, Mary also noted an example of significantly impacting a student’s life through relationship. She explained that she was made aware of the impact through the student and parent sharing their appreciation to her when the student graduated from high school. Specifically, she elaborated:

I think especially in this context, that I've been able to reach individual students by seeking out those relationships. I think specifically to a girl I taught a few years ago who really struggled. She was really bright; she came from a difficult home situation, and she struggled to get work turned in. So she would just come to my room and work on stuff. Sometimes, I would help her with it specifically, and sometimes it would just be a place to be. But that relationship was so valuable to her and as she graduated both she and her father were so appreciative of that. So, I've just seen how I can have that specific effect and relationship with students and change what they love and do in the classroom environment.

Challenges in Connecting. A few participants discussed challenges in building relationships with students. Kayla, a special’s teacher, shared the difficulty in connecting individually with students she sees only once a week.

It’s really hard to build that relationship with a kid that you only see for thirty minutes a week. So, I think that would be one of the biggest challenges for specials, is really trying to connect with kids in such a short amount of time.

Another challenge that some teachers talked about was the time it takes to build relationships with students. In contrast to longevity teachers’ almost automatic rapport with students, Reese, a new teacher, expressed her understanding that she can’t expect relationships overnight. According to the longevity teachers, Reese is correct in stating, “but it also takes time to build those relationships. So, it’s a work in progress, you know.

So, I think that takes time.” Whether that time is halfway through a school year, multiple years, or more than a decade at one school, it is evident to these teachers that time is a significant constituent for establishing trust, rapport, and connection with students, which in turn affects teacher efficacy.

Theme Two: Support

Teachers at all levels of experience discussed the impact of external supports on their efficacy. Participants described the influence that others, particularly administrators, have on teachers’ perspectives about their ability to be successful. Identifying “Verbal Affirmation” (Social Persuasion) and “Trust” as vitally important supports, participants disclosed their conscientiousness regarding how others perceive them. Social persuasion proved to be extremely effective to strengthen self-efficacy and a powerful encourager for teachers struggling with self-doubts. Lack of social persuasion had the opposite effect, leading teachers to assume administrative indifference towards them. Trust was primarily described as a perception of being trusted by administrators or others to be successful. Participants provided examples of others’ behaviors and conversations with others that produced perceptions of being trusted. Equally important, a lack of being trusted not only could lead to lower self-efficacy but was in fact deemed to be a deciding factor for teachers to leave a particular school.

Social Persuasion. Participants spoke about receiving social persuasion from a variety of sources, including administrators, colleagues, parents, and students. The influence from some sources was perceived as weightier than others. For example, most

participants agreed that affirmation from an administrator was worth much more than affirmation from colleagues. Appreciation from parents and past students helped teachers see the positive impact made on students but was not as necessary for confidence when teachers perceived that administrators would back them irrespective of parental support.

Allegra, a new teacher, shared her perspective that social persuasion from any source helped boost her self-efficacy. For Allegra, the value was not on a specific source, such as administration, but rather the frequency of positive feedback from any source.

She stated:

Like if [redacted teacher name] says something like, “oh that was really fun, that worked well.” Or if [redacted teacher name] when I was teaching with her went “that went well.” Or if I get observed and the principal says it. Or like my college professors when they’d say like, “Oh, you did this...” you know, any praise from them helps me gain confidence.

Most teachers spoke in-depth regarding the immense value of social persuasion directly from an administrator. Misty shared how support from her principal in the form of affirmation helps her know she is meeting expectations and helps her feel valued. She shared that even something as trivial as being thanked for “showing up today” would be appreciated. She shared the following example of administrator support:

...knowing the support that you have from your principal. I think my last school I had two administrators. One when I taught technology and one when I taught second grade, but they were very encouraging. They provided affirmation to their teachers. When there were issues, as long as you kept them in the loop and they knew what to expect they would help you walk through those steps or help you walk through those with the parents.

Participants talked about social persuasion from colleagues as a significant source of self-efficacy, though still underscored by affirmation from administrators. Jane shared how recognition in the form of an award from colleagues expressing that she was a

teacher of outstanding excellence meant a lot to her. In comparison to affirmation from administrators, however, Jane explained that the sources were distinct in her mind. She disclosed:

I think I view it [affirmation from colleagues] differently just because sometimes I feel like that [affirmation from colleagues] that has more weight to it and sometimes it's not as much weight. Especially like last year with the difficult class, I saw that meant the world to me that they said, you can do it. And yes, you do have a difficult class, but I see this, this, and this. And you're doing a great job. That meant a lot. I think sometimes I need to hear it from my boss. I think that makes a big difference because they're the ones who hired me.

Misty agreed with this perspective that social persuasion from administrators and colleagues were distinct from one another. Interestingly, Misty used the same rationale as Jane, explaining that administrators are the one who hire and fire and therefore have more influence on teacher efficacy with their words. Specifically, Misty stated:

I think it does come from colleagues, but it isn't really the same. I mean, I think there's an appreciation and, but... I mean, 'cause your boss is the person that's going to hire you or fire, so you need, you know. You need their support, you need their affirmation. You to know if you're, you know, what are their expectations and are you meeting them?

In the examples of administrative affirmation, participants described the influence as one of strong dependency. Whereas affirmation from other sources was helpful, participants spoke about “needing” verbal confirmation from administrators that they are performing well.

Participants shared stories of receiving verbal appreciation from parents and students of how they had made an impact on students. Reese, a new teacher, shared her experience of receiving recognition when her principal shared with her about the positive impact she had on a past student. She stated, “Words of affirmation are great. [redacted –

principal name] came in this morning and did tell me about that conversation and it was 100-percent exactly what I needed.” Reese went on to explain why the verbal praise was so powerful, stating:

...but just that recognition, because so many things don't go right (laughs). So to have that recognition, that you are making an impact on this one student, I think is just the fuel. And it's like, that's what keeps you going! And that's what brings you back to 'Why am I doing this in the first place?' And it's because of them.

Misty’s insights shed more light on this topic as she contrasted positive and negative feedback from parents. She explained that negative feedback or confrontation can challenge a teacher’s efficacy, while positive feedback strengthens efficacy.

Yes, positively and negatively. I think the first time, especially as a new teacher, that first parent challenge that you have definitely rocks your world, you know, and kind of shakens your confidence. So, but I had great parents last year in my [redacted] year class that, I mean, even a year later that are still contacting me and encouraging me as a teacher and you know, the students are contacting me and when we left I made a big impact, and you could just tell by the positive reinforcement that those parents and students would give you.

Mentors. There was a consensus among participants as to the great value of relationships with mentor teachers. This was perceived as a significant source of support that enhanced teachers’ self-efficacy. Experienced teachers reflected back on specific colleagues who had been mentors to them. New teachers divulged their desire for mentors and in some cases a perception of lacking mentorship resulted in feelings of isolation. When the term mentor was used by participants, in almost all cases, it was in reference to a colleague with more teaching experience. In one case, a teacher stated that

she viewed her principal as a strong mentor for teachers who “works to make me a more effective teacher and just give me whatever advice.”

For novice teachers, in positive case examples, teachers related how helpful it was for her to have someone to go to with questions. In negative case examples, new teachers shared their experiences of not feeling that they have someone to go to for help. In some respects, this lack was ascribed to colleagues having only a few years of teaching experience. In other respects, it was ascribed to experienced colleagues being too busy to be of much help. These new teachers agreed that isolation inhibited their self-efficacy, stating: “I just feel almost very secluded, which is hard to build confidence in yourself when you feel that alone.”

Concerning transition teachers, participants related how mentor colleagues helped them transition into a new school, even when the teacher had prior teaching experience. Jane described how a colleague coached her during a transition from a private school to a public school when Jane was nervous about the change.

And she’s like, look at me. And she said, you’re going to be fine. And the fact that she was there and she kind of coached me... It was just a really good transition. And I knew that she had my back. That was really helpful. Did I still feel like a deer in the highlights at times, yes. It was just a different situation. But, she was really helpful.

Jane and others consistently agreed that a relationship of friendship was the foundation of mentorship. Jane shared:

And there was another teacher that I became very good friends with who saw that it was my first year in public school and kind of needed a little more guidance about what to do. And I found from her the importance of relaxing. And having good relationships with your colleagues where you want to go out with them and go get dinner after a hard Friday. You know, like, that was a good thing.

Teachers explained that these mentor relationships developed on their own rather than being the result of a school induction program. In one negative case example, a participant shared about a forced mentorship relationship that was not helpful because there was no friendship and the mentee felt intimidated. In positive case examples, participants described a mentor-initiated friendship of trust, openness, and vulnerability that allowed for a two-way dialog of simply talking through issues and scenarios. In many stories, the mentor served as a source of advice, guidance, and feedback.

Experienced teachers who viewed themselves as unofficial mentors and coaches to new teachers indicated that helping build others' self-efficacy resulted in strengthening their own efficacy. Multiple participants explained that coaching others made them more aware of their own competence and gave them a sense of how far they had grown as teachers.

Social Persuasion. Another factor that teachers perceived as support that boosted their self-efficacy was receiving feedback. Participants utilized the term “feedback” to describe receiving specific advice on best practices following administrator or colleague observations. More than the verbal encouragement of saying, “you can do this, I believe in you,” feedback provides participants with specific tools, strategies, or perspective to improve their practice. Participants shared how feedback in the form of a 2-way dialog helped them think through classroom challenges. Cheryl shared an example of an administrator observing a lesson and a classroom management challenge that manifested during the lesson. Cheryl shared how a follow-up conversation with the administrator

helped her talk through the problem and develop a plan for handling similar situations in the future. She disclosed the following:

I went and talked with my principal and it was a particular lesson that went terribly, and he was observing me, and something just happened with it that out of the blue... we were reading Brave New World... and one of the students made a comment about a topic related to sex, and I was just like, "Wow! I don't know what to do with that at this particular moment." And I was very... we were all very aware that the principal was in the classroom. And I felt really challenged by that student, and I had had issues with that student throughout the year too. So, we just talked through it. And I feel like I got some good support on it and ways to handle unexpected situations like that one. Or unexpected comments that students might make.

In responding to the question of what helps her self-efficacy grow, Misty also indicated that feedback from others is valuable. She further elaborated that effective feedback for her includes a combination of noting strengths and areas for improvement. She stated:

I think when an administrator or a co-teacher comes and observes you, pointing out your strengths. I think those are good.... I think you need those observations, but in that observation, they need to have positive and negative. You know what I mean?

Trust & Trusted. The most prominent aspect of support emerged as participants consistently spoke about how being trusted by others strengthened their self-efficacy. In an example of colleague trust, Jane elaborated on how colleagues coming to her for advice demonstrated to her that they trusted her.

I've also felt valued when other teachers come to me for questions for how to handle their classroom. And I was like, wow, why are you coming to me. And I thought, well I guess, I am considered a veteran teacher and here it goes. And that wasn't immediate. But when I came here, and they saw that I had taught. I think that was pretty powerful to me that they would come ask me. And take what I say as, not gospel, but oh yeah, if she does it, it's got to be good. It's like, oh, a little bit of pressure there, but wow, thanks for trusting me.

Teachers related how administrators demonstrated trust in them that they know what they are doing in the classroom. Jane related her experience as a first-year teacher and being nervous during an observation. The principal's reassurance that, "I know you can do [redacted] grade math. I hired you" gave Jane a perception of being trusted even when she felt she had bombed the lesson.

Yes, a very specific time was when my old principal hired me. That was the confidence that she had in me was that she would... she knew me growing up... and that she still had confidence in my teaching ability when she hadn't seen me teach before. She simply knew me. And the fact that when she came in to give me my formal first observation, I couldn't answer the question on the board. She still let me teach. She understood that I was just nervous.

Asking for automatic administrative backing regardless of the good sense in teachers' decisions would be unwise, simply because teachers make mistakes from time to time and may not always handle a situation in the best way. Misty addressed this issue by clarifying how she keeps her administrators "in the loop" regarding mistakes she may make or situations in which parents may respond negatively. She shared that this open communication facilitates the administrator's ability to demonstrate trust and support for the teacher even when the teacher makes a mistake. Misty divulged the following:

I think for me I needed to get my administrators in the loop because sometimes we do make a bad decision. And so, to have you walk through that ...because if it's bad, and it's a blow to your confidence then, you know, you start questioning your abilities. So by having an administrator, um, on your side that kinda helps walk through that.

Misty expounded on these statements by detailing specific examples of when she felt she needed to share a situation with her principal.

Mmm, well I had to go to my principal. I had to let him know that I responded the wrong way... And, you know, so that when the parents called, or if the parents called, you know. So, there's a, two boys my very first year, they were a thorn in my side, but I didn't discipline them the right way. And then there were a few years ago, at my last school, one young man that was just...yeah. So, I made sure that I had my principal. Like, you know, "oh I messed up" you know. So, then they kind of help you walk through that.

Participants revealed their perception that administrative backing demonstrates whether administration values teachers or views them as the bottom of the priority list. One veteran teacher expressed his perception of teachers moving to the last priority position over time, stating, "It used to be students, teachers, parents, and lastly administrative convenience. Now, it seems flipped to administrative convenience, parents, students, and teachers last." Another participant expounded on this concept by sharing specific examples and explaining the exasperating effect this has on teacher efficacy.

It feels like the parents are coming first, and honestly sometimes in this school I have felt that pressure of "but this kid is rich, but this kid comes from the board, but this kid comes from the family that owns the cement company that's making the new building"...And that kind of stuff, like that betrays the teachers' confidence and it was just, that's going to, that's not going to go well and that's going to frustrate.

Collective Efficacy. Participants spoke about the influence of the school climate and culture on their self-efficacy. Negative examples of working in schools where colleagues bickered constantly had a negative effect on participants. In stark contrast, Misty shared a positive experience in a school where colleagues worked together as a team, boosting her self-efficacy.

In my last school they [colleague relationships] were very positive. We worked together as a team. There were three second grade teachers and

my strengths were different from the other two, and so we totally worked together on... and just emphasizing things that I was good at that I would take the reins and the lead on certain things and they would do the same. And so, uh, when you aren't threatened, sometimes you can be threatened by other people that you work with, but when you see your gifts and abilities and you work together as a team, it was very successful.

Allegra further contrasted her experiences with two different schools that had distinct school climates. Allegra described one school in which colleagues were pessimistic, negative, and hostile towards one another and their jobs.

I have to be in a positive environment or else I just, I just slowly die inside. So, I've been in schools where no one likes anything. "Kids are stupid, the administration is stupid, the principal is stupid, this job is stupid." And I'm just like, ugh, it just sucks all my energy up. Why are you even here? You clearly hate this, it's not like you're making a ton of money, just go do something else, you're not helping anyone. Mmm, makes me angry.

In her current school, Allegra described teachers loving their jobs and genuinely liking one another.

And I think that's what drew me to here. In some parts it's like I came here and everyone liked their job. Because, I mean, their job was hard and they'd talk about, sometimes you got to vent and that's okay, but you cannot be in an eternal state of anger, you know? ... and pessimism. And I loved that about this school. And I was like, people actually want to be there, they like working, they like each other. They have disagreements but they take care of them instead of having a bunch of hostility stowed under their little hearts for twenty years. So, you know, I think that was like, I want to come back to this school. I think that's when I knew. So, if people are not in peace, or I know that they're not happy, or I know that they're not doing their job, it's hard for me to do my job. I know it shouldn't affect me like that, but it does. So it's much better for me to be with positive people who are passionate about what they're doing.

In these opposing examples, Allegra explained the effect each of these environments had on her. In the negative school climate, she felt discouraged. In the positive school climate, she felt more passionate and capable in teaching.

Theme Three: Knowledge & Growth

The theme of knowledge and growth emerged from participants' descriptions of knowing their content, on the job experience, growth in students and self, and learning from observing colleagues. Knowledge and growth were selected based on participants' frequent use of the terms "know" and "grow." The two concepts complement one another under one theme heading since participants described them as interconnected. As teachers and students gain knowledge, there is visual evidence of progress, indicating growth.

Student Growth. The most prominent component of this theme was seeing growth in students. All of the participants spoke about their primary teaching goal of student growth, including academic and personal growth. Cheryl, in her 16th year, shared her goal for students to "do something they thought they couldn't do at the beginning of the year." Allegra, in her first year, echoed this stating, "Like if I see, oh look you couldn't do this before, and now you can do this now. That means I'm doing something right." Mary also stated her desire for all students to experience growth. She voiced:

That's our goal with all students... no matter where they start, to get them to grow. So I just kind of try to figure out how to do that, and how to make them feel successful.

Mary further expressed her view of success as analogous to student growth, regardless of the widespread variety in what the end product of each student's growth looked like.

They [students] reflect back on that and say, "I learned so much. At the beginning of the year, I could not [redacted]; at the end of the year, I could [redacted]." And so, you know? To whatever degree they were successful... some of them were not very successful and others were wildly successful. I feel a sense of accomplishment in that they grew through that process.

Participants talked about how building student efficacy also strengthened their own efficacy. Teachers related this in terms of helping students change their perspective or mindset to believe in themselves, and therefore give their best effort.

Mary shared how seeing her students show grit and determination helps her feel more efficacious, stating:

When I see that students are successful and effective; when I see them growing, when I see them doing well. Uh, even... I mean it doesn't need to be that every day is perfect. When I see that they are working through something; when they show that grit and determination, and then that end product is really great.

Reese voiced her thoughts about changing students' perspectives by challenging them and supporting them. She shared:

But I think that's one of the biggest differences you can make in a child's life is to push them past that fixed mindset; past putting the pencil down, past giving up. And make them want to grow. And maybe that's you walk alongside them, maybe that's you just push, push push, um. But that's something lifelong. That's a lifelong lesson that I think can be taught to students.

Reese also shared how challenging students to apply and think critically about basic knowledge boosts student efficacy, and in turn raised her efficacy.

There's other days where they are really building that knowledge, going from one step to the next, and those are always my favorite, you know. When I don't have to actually teach them anything. I can just ask good questions... and I know we talked about that last time... the ability to ask good questions that lead them to building that knowledge or to ask further questions. And that always, just, builds the confidence of students and builds my confidence as well.

Jane disclosed her experiences with helping students make personal growth, aside from academic growth. She shared how she has been part of students' change in their perspective, attitude, and behavior. She stated, "That is, to see kids change in such a

radical way and getting to experience that with them and lead them in that. That keeps me going.”

In general terms, participants spoke about their self-efficacy being affected in the actual moments of student learning and growth in the classroom. Sunny declared, “I just love light bulb moments when they get it.” Sunny also acknowledged that she feels particularly confident when students are all “getting it”, highly interested, and engaged. Mary expressed how her self-efficacy soars when prior students remember and cherish learning experiences, and when she is made aware that “something sticks for students.”

Seeing Growth in Self. In addition to recognizing and celebrating growth in students, teachers expressed the exponential effect that awareness of self-growth has on their self-efficacy. Participants spoke about their innate passion for learning that motivates them to keep growing. New teachers mentioned realizing how they are getting better at teaching with more practice, which serves as fuel to keep going strong. One teacher shared her experience of seeing growth in herself through being mentored by a colleague. Two participants spoke about seeing growth in themselves through being informal mentors and coaches to new teachers. Being a support to others by talking them through things the “mentor” knows well strengthens the mentor’s self-efficacy.

Content Knowledge. Teachers expressed the importance of knowing and loving the teaching content. According to their experiences, the better they understood their content, the more confident they felt as teachers. When one high school teacher was assigned to a sub-category she had less expertise in, her self-efficacy was initially lower

until she had taught with the unfamiliar content for a while. New teachers also spoke about this phenomenon, though describing it in more general terms of “knowing what I am doing.” This *knowing* included understanding the content or curriculum they were teaching, which they believed would simply take time using the curriculum. Elementary teachers talked about feeling more confident with specific content areas that they knew better. An elementary teacher in her second year shared that her self-efficacy was significantly higher going into her first-year teaching, having used the same curriculum in her student teaching.

On the Job Know-How. Participants talked about building self-efficacy through time and practice with implementation. Sunny talked about learning to have good classroom management in order to practically implement any great teaching ideas. Allegra, a new teacher, expressed her desire to simply have more experience dealing with issues so that she knows what to do in those situations. Misty shared how being well prepared, having tools in her toolbox, and lessons going smoothly boost her self-efficacy. Mary spoke about being responsive to student confusion during the lesson and being able figure out a different way to help students understand mid-lesson.

Vicarious Experiences. Participants shared their positive experiences of learning and growing from observing colleagues. As a teacher transitioning to a new grade level, Misty expressed how she grew exponentially as a teacher by observing and working with grade level colleagues. As a teacher in transition to SCS, Sunny spoke about the value of observing experienced colleagues to learn how to teach ESL students. Cheryl found

herself inspired in such a profound way after observing a veteran colleague that she aspired to become like this teacher. The observations gave Cheryl a vision of the kind of teacher she wanted to become.

Theme Four: Balance

The theme, balance, emerged from the results of this study. Teachers spoke in-depth about the challenge of balancing workload with their personal lives. Often an imbalance of too much work led to burnout. Teachers described a number of different approaches they took in an attempt to create and maintain balance. These decisions, approaches, and strategies are presented below.

As the researcher, I cannot endorse any of the following choices or methods as superior to others. The results of this study revealed that finding balance, through whatever method necessary, was a significant source influencing teacher self-efficacy and one's choice to remain in the teaching profession. Therefore, some of the following case examples do illustrate the negative effects of teachers struggling to find balance, either due to internal pressures, external pressures beyond their control, or a combination of both. The following examples also provide specific approaches that proved successful for individual teachers in their quest for balance. Hence, I have intentionally chosen to not combine participants' thoughts as a composite "one size fits all" description in this section, preferring instead to tell each individual teacher's story.

The Choice to Leave. One participant, Mary, explained the external reasons that left her feeling limited in her ability to effectively teach. She shared the following:

I have more students this year than I've ever had before, and I feel, I feel that pressure. If you can stick to a class size of eighteen, in this context; it's ESL and I think very different from most contexts, you can accomplish a lot. When you are bumping up numbers to twenty-six, you cannot accomplish as much. And when you have students who need specific things from you, uh, like I'm just not nearly as effective at doing that, because we run out of time, I run out of uh, personal resources. I can only answer so many questions in a forty-three-minute class period. So, I think that is; that's one of the biggest stressors is "How do you get the grading done in that time?"

This sense of not being able to be effective as a teacher led Mary to question her ability to teach long-term, further leading her to consider leaving the teaching profession completely.

I mean, I think doing the best with what I have. I do think that long-term, that affects my ability to teach and stay in the profession. I see that with my own decisions about teaching. I see that in others' decisions about teaching, whether it's to go from a mainstream classroom to another position within this school, or whether it's to leave the profession entirely.

Here, Mary mentioned others' decisions to go part-time or change positions within a school. These approaches are explored in more detail through Cheryl and Sunny's stories below.

The Choice to Go Part-Time. Cheryl shared her story of reaching a place of feeling really tired in her fifth year of teaching. She shared her dilemma with the amount of work to keep up with, particularly grading. She also shared the challenge of supporting students with learning differences in a school that didn't provide support for struggling students. Other challenges that led to workload exhaustion included the number of students she taught and the number of different levels she was responsible to prepare for.

During her first five years of teaching, Cheryl felt like she didn't have "any kind of work-life balance."

Motivated to make a change for other reasons, Cheryl moved overseas and began working with a non-profit mission's organization. She also taught, but at a "much diminished scale" in order to recover from workload burnout. Although asked to teach full-time, Cheryl held her ground stating that she would only teach part-time. She explained that she knew she couldn't keep up with the work level involved in full-time teaching. She further expressed the importance of maintaining a work-life balance in order to have time to spend with her family.

Even after a number of years of working part-time, Cheryl disclosed that she still has to intentionally practice work-life balance. Cheryl shared that she feels at times that she still works full-time, even with a part-time teaching schedule. The approach Cheryl has used to handle workload pressure and create balance is to set boundaries. She intentionally sets aside one day a week that she tries to keep schoolwork free. Cheryl confessed that she is not always successful in meeting this goal but keeps attempting it and refining it each school year. Cheryl stated that she was especially successful the first year she implemented the goal because she "was realistic about it."

The Choice to Change Positions. Sunny shared her story of reaching a place of exhaustion after ten years of teaching in primarily the same position. She described coming to school feeling like it was a burden instead of the joyful, excitement she had in teaching for years. Sunny changed to part-time for one year to spend more time with a newborn. She then returned to teaching full time, but in a teaching position with lighter

preparation and grading, the main pressures she was worried she wouldn't be able to keep up with. Stating that the primary motivation for making the switch was her concern about work-life balance with a new baby at home, Sunny also acknowledged that even without the baby she wasn't sure whether she would have been able to keep teaching in her prior position. Sunny expressed that she felt she need a break after ten years because of exhaustion and burnout.

The change in position was highly successful for Sunny and did wonders for her self-efficacy and growth as a teacher. Sunny also regained her joy and enjoyment for teaching. She attributed the high self-efficacy and new energy to two specific characteristics of the new position. First, Sunny described getting to do the "fun part of teaching" without the load of responsibilities that caused her stress. Secondly, she talked about gaining new strategies by observing colleagues and being a mentor/coach to new teachers.

Bringing Burnout Back into Balance. For a teacher who has maintained a full-time teaching position as a mainstream classroom teacher for 13 years, Jane was able to share insights about what leads to burnout and how she brings herself back into balance when she starts to feel "completely burnt out". Jane identified both internal and external pressures that create stress. Internal pressure comes from Jane's Gold Standard of wanting to "make every lesson just the best lesson ever." This includes "really good lesson plans and have really good power points and really good this..." The internal pressure Jane feels also comes from the responsibility she feels she has to get students ready for the next grade level. This pressure is intense for Jane because she believes if

she is not adequately preparing students academically, she should not be teaching. Jane also shed light on a pressure she feels to keep the Gold Standard up after she has been successful, and others label her as a “Gold Standard Teacher.” Specifically, she shared these insights in the following words:

I think part of it is me. Part of it I put my own stress on me. I’m not good at finding what those stressors are that I’m putting on me. But, I do know that I do that. Um, I have perfection as the bar and I’m not perfect and so I know I put pressure on myself. I think another thing is when you’ve taught a class and people have seen how you have seen how you’ve taught them and how that ends up. That puts more pressure on for the next year. And so after last year, this year I’m like, oh boy, and some of the parents. I think I probably project this a little bit, but I don’t want... no, no, no, just because you’ve heard good things. I don’t know. Some years are good, some years are bad. I think a lot of times that comes into play. People see what happened the year before, or years before. And they are like, we want you! And it’s going to be different for them. Letting that be ok. I think that’s a huge pressure.

The external pressures that affect Jane’s stress level include preparation, grading, the fast pace of everything, and decision-making. Jane expressed:

Sometimes it’s I can’t grade another paper and yet I have 5 more stacks to grade. And grades are due in 2 days. And then I have, you know, just the workload of everything that happens so quickly ... I didn’t realize how tired it made me, but making decisions, how many decisions, split second decisions teachers have to make in a day wears me out. And many days, some days are easier than others. But realizing the fact that I make so many split-second decisions. That yes, sometimes figuring out what to cook for dinner that night is overwhelming because I’ve made so many decisions.

Jane shared the following about losing perspective and her enjoyment of teaching when she feels burnt out, stating:

I understand that because we do have summers technically off, that we will work harder through the year. But, I also don’t think I should spend 6 hours a weekend doing lesson plans and grading. And I find that many

times that is what happens. And that's where I get completely burnt out. And [lose] the joy of teaching. I lose perspective.

To bring the burnout back into balance, Jane discussed how she swings the pendulum in the other direction, being kind to herself by lightning the teaching load for herself and the academic load for students the next day.

And having basically grace for myself. And going ok, so a lot of times after that. If I've had one of those [days] where I can't make another decision, the next day at school, I will usually go a little lighter on the workload. I will enjoy my kids. And by when I say enjoy my kids, I will do maybe a game outside. Maybe I'll read longer. Maybe I'll let them read in a special spot. You know, I've even... made their test easier or shorter. Just because, you know, in a fun, easy way that lets me relate in a different way to my kids. And that brings it back into balance. Of, ok, yes, I'm still their teacher, but it is not just about making decisions. I can enjoy these kids. And they enjoy it too.

Jane explained that this swing back to lighter, easier, and more fun enables Jane to connect with her students on a relational level, which reminds her why she loves teaching. This brings the pressure, stress, and burnout back into perspective.

Jane also spoke about the value of getting feedback from colleagues when in a state of burnout or loss of perspective. She shared that she had greatly benefited from colleagues coming alongside her and talking her through why she feels burned out and helpful advice for how to handle it. She expressed how burnout sometimes results in wanting to quit. Colleagues have been able to "talk her off that ledge" by giving Jane perspective and encouraging her.

They are like, ok, this is going on and I'm seeing this is the connection to why you want to leave... Ok, well let's talk. It seems you're burning out. What can we do about that? And loving me as a person more than as a just a teacher. I think that plays a huge role in it.

Proactively Creating Balance. Reese, a new teacher in her first semester of teaching, spoke about the tension she feels with balancing work and rest. Although she doesn't have experience with reaching a point of teacher burnout, Reese was able to provide a fresh perspective on preventing imbalance through proactive approaches. Reese shared a number of approaches she uses to keep her workload from spilling out into all her weeknights, weekends, and sleep time. These approaches are based on Reese's belief that she can have both high expectations for herself and take time-out to rest and enjoy life. She asserted that this is possible through intentional practice. One approach was focus. Reese described this as having a weekly focus point to guide her teaching goals and self-reflection on lessons, which she attributed to an online education class she is also taking. Reese talked about embracing the fact that she has no end of opportunities to make her teaching better... because she teaches all the time! So, if lessons don't turn out as hoped for one day, Reese knows she always has tomorrow to make it better. Another approach was making the most of work time by being effective and efficient. Reese explained that she checks herself if she is truly focused on work and productive when she sits down to plan lessons or grade papers. The final approach is setting boundaries around non-work times by simply putting work away at a certain point, whether it is perfectly completed or not.

Maintaining Balance. One teacher in her tenth year, who has experience juggling work and family, discussed approaches to achieve balance and actively maintain it. Misty, having taught in a variety of grade levels and positions over the years, also

identified internal and external stressors. Misty explained these using the term “expectation.”

I think maybe not pressure but expectations. Um. I mean, there’s expectations from parents, there’s expectations from your students, and your administration, but I also put pressure and expectations on myself.

Misty shared her insight on specific approaches that act against balance, namely working too much and being a perfectionist. She also identified approaches that have helped her maintain balance. These include prioritizing, being realistic, and asking for help. She voiced the following:

I think you need to figure out what’s realistic. I think you need to prioritize, because if you’re a workaholic or if you’re very um, OCD, then you can go to an extreme that isn’t healthy for yourself. So you have to keep all those pressures in balance I think, but be realistic, prioritize, and then you know, you can always ask for support or feedback from other teachers.

These individual stories illustrate real examples of how teachers strive to attain balance while also upholding high expectations for themselves as teachers of excellence.

Theme Five: Gratification

Participants described their feelings of delight and enjoyment with teaching as a whole and also regarding specific elements. Participants stated that they loved teaching. George, a longevity teacher of many decades, shared that he truly enjoyed teaching and looked forward to Mondays. He stated that he viewed teaching more as an opportunity “to play” with academic content than as a job.

Participants talked about feeling gratified when they were able to make significant positive changes, either for individual students, for a class, or at the school level. Many

participants shared specific stories of making the difference for students. Teachers voiced stories of helping students make academic or social emotional growth, helping students gain self-confidence or perseverance, or turning a challenging class into a group of students delighted to learn. One teacher spoke about feeling fulfilled in making positive changes at the school level by influencing changes in offering advanced classes and making graduation requirements more equitable. This teacher also described a sense of gratification in feeling that his skill set was needed by the school; that it would be difficult to replace his level of teaching competence in his content area by any prospective incoming teacher recruit.

Research Question Two:

How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic
describe how they develop self-efficacy?

Self-Efficacy Growth Cycle Stories

The following personal stories illustrate a self-efficacy growth cycle. Components of the cycle are inserted into participants' scripts as a way to identify the specific phrases that correspond to each component. The cycle appears the same for different individuals and across a wide spectrum of teaching challenges. For the first-year teacher and the veteran, the pattern is remarkably similar. The following examples represent descriptions of teachers' experiences that included most or all of the cycle.

Reese, as a first-year teacher, shared the dissonance she felt in trying to find life balance with teaching. She expressed her driving desire to be an excellent teacher, even

in her first year. With high expectations for herself, Reese recognized that she needed to intentionally practice balance so as to not become completely consumed with teaching responsibilities. This intentional practice included efficiency, focused and effective work time, and setting limits. She indicated that she had not yet learned how to do this, but that she had identified a specific solution and was intentionally practicing it. Specifically, she shared the following:

I think... honestly, I think this year has just been a little confusing for me. Because I think coming into it, my mindset was, I need to have every lesson perfect. I need to spend all of these hours perfect. **[The Gold Standard]** It can be the best... perfect-- growth mindset. I can be the best. And then I, you know, was learning about giving yourself grace, and it's okay if you fall, and don't spend every hour doing schoolwork, and don't become consumed. **[Challenge - Balance]** And then it gets tricky, because you're being told to chill, calm down, breathe. And then, so there's like this divide. **[Dissonance]**

I'm taking an online class, and that's been really good encouragement of "set high expectations for the students. set higher expectations for yourself. What can you be doing?" And there's little tips. So each week, there's like another focus point. And I think that's been good for me, to kind of focus on. Also just like self-reflecting on lessons has been good, uh it's different than your methods classes where you teach one lesson during the semester... now you teach all the time! So you have tomorrow to make tomorrow better. So I think that's been good, but I'm also focusing on grace... taking that time to rest. Being productive... and I think that's where it comes... being productive in your work time. **[Perspective]** Being effective, being efficient, and then taking that time to sit. And I think honestly, it does come back to... how we set up our life, and what we focus on. And when I'm sitting down and planning my lessons... am I focused on this? You know? Am I effective doing my planning? Do I evaluate what's worked and what hasn't worked to make these... uh. But, then do I put it away and go to bed? And like it's okay. **[Teacher Behavior Change]**

I think you can [have both]. I think it takes a lot of intentional practice. I'm currently in the intentional practice stage. **[Intentional Practice]**

Teachers with prior experience in different school contexts also described the cycle when they transitioned to teach at SCS. Jane shared her story of prior successful teaching experience and high self-efficacy that was challenged with ESL learners. Through gaining a new perspective of the extra time and explanation needed for teaching ESL learners, Jane was able to begin adjusting her teaching. She stated that practicing these adjustments over time has made it easier for her. Jane's transition story mirrors many other transition stories, including Cheryl, Sunny, George, and Misty. Jane's story is included here to illustrate the remarkable parallel experiences that previously successful veteran teachers have when then start teaching at SCS. All of the participants in this study who had experienced a transition from teaching stateside to SCS shared the same story of a traumatic, unexpected dissonance between their expectations and the new challenges.

When I came here, I mean I changed countries, I changed grade levels, I changed just about everything. And teaching was the one thing I thought, I've got this. I totally have it. I don't need to worry about the teaching aspect. **[The Gold Standard]** That was before I actually got here. And so, I came in and when it wasn't the same, when I had to use different... for ESL, for the culture here, for just the school let along the culture in the DR. I was kind of blind-sighted. **[Challenge]** [Redacted] was my co teacher. I remember her saying, yeah, it's different isn't it. And I said, I don't like it. **[Dissonance]** But the more I was here, the more I realized **[Perspective]** ok, I just I have to adapt to what's going on here. **[Teacher Behavior Change]**

And now I'm a few more years in... I can more easily identify those things. **[Intentional Practice]** I'm like, ok, if I read [redacted - book name] to my class, they can understand it. It just takes a little bit longer. Ok, we can do that. I read slower. I explain the things and I know what they don't understand. And so, I can adapt the things that I love about teaching for these kids. **[Equilibrium]**

Although not first year teachers, the challenges of the new context were significant enough to create strong dissonance. These transition teachers quickly became

aware of the large gap between their expectations and the reality of teaching in the new context. However, one benefit of having prior successful teaching in a different context was that it helped Jane to clarify that the issue was adapting instruction for ESL learners, not that she didn't know how to teach.

Teachers with prior successful teaching may experience substantial dissonance with classroom management. The following account is Sunny's transition story from a small school in the states where she had little management issues to SCS where she encountered a challenging class to manage. The transition challenges were compounded by the classroom management challenges in the new context. Sunny found the solution to be connection, building relationships with the students. Now, after many successful years in the SCS context, Sunny has institutionalized rapport and relationships with students as the core of gaining and retaining student respect.

I was second-guessing everything [**Dissonance**]. Ugh, I mean I would sit on the floor of my apartment and cry. I would come home from school call my parents and just cry and be like, I don't know if I should do this... I'm never going to earn their respect. I don't know how to reach them. I can't talk to them, I don't understand them, my kids speak Spanish. [**Challenge**]

That first year, that everyone said was impossible [**Challenge**] and you'll never love them, and they'll never respect you and we developed a relationship and it started when I apologized to them for one day where I lost my temper [**Teacher Behavior Change**]. I actually told them like, "I screwed up," and they were like "miss, no teacher has ever apologized to us ever." And I was like, "that's sad, because I'm sure that other teachers have said things that they shouldn't have said" and I don't know like, that day kind of changed... It's not like there was a huge ginormous but little by little it changed [**Initial Positive Outcome**].

I think, the students respected me more, and like saw that I actually cared because I was willing to say I messed up [**Perspective**] and I think teachers in the past only ever pointed the finger. Because they were a hard class, like they had a reputation, they were not...like the following year in

fifth grade they would place bets on what time they could make their teacher cry by, they were just not friendly children...They were hard but I loved them. **[Intentional Practice – Relationship Building]** And the next year I had a class I really bonded with. **[Aggregated Positive Outcomes]** In conversations with other non-participant teachers at the school, classroom

management dissonance can resurface after many years of successful teaching. One teacher expressed that after more than a decade of teaching, she was confronted with a class of students that made her question herself every day. Teachers from my pilot study also shared their experiences of struggling with extremely difficult groups of students after 17 or 25 years of successful classroom management. Teachers handled this challenge in different ways. Some experienced dissonance as a crisis point in their teaching career. Other teachers admitted not being excited to go to work every day but finding a way to connect with the challenging students and loved them with patience and care through the school year.

Participants also spoke about external challenges due to imposed scheduling. Cheryl's shared her experience of adjusting to daily short class periods from block scheduling. In the tension of trying to cover curriculum content and ensure student understanding, Cheryl has found a solution in focusing on quality understanding instead of quantity of material covered. She explained that she is still refining this approach as she still feels the tension (as stress) of the gap between her expectations for covering content and students actually grasping the material.

Time... And one thing: going to forty-three-minute periods. Because when I first started here, we were in block. And when I taught in the States, we were in blocks **[The Gold Standard]**. So, I had never, never taught a class where we met every day. And I do, I feel like, well, I understand the purpose for it, and my students actually are better now, seeing me every day, uh, forty-three minutes is a really short amount of time. I feel like we

start class and it's over. And my students say the same thing. They're like, wow, this class goes so fast! Because it's stressful **[Dissonance]** to try to get everything covered **[Challenge]**.

Probably... we're in too hurried of a pace. **[Perspective]** And sometimes I have to adjust my lesson when we're mid-lesson, and be, "okay, we're not going to get through it all today." **[Teacher Behavior Change, Intentional Practice]** Because I can tell that we're losing them, and it's more important that we understand what we're doing as opposed to that we get everything done **[Equilibrium]**... My first year teaching, I did not have that perspective.

Prior success can create a mental model of specific approaches that have proven effective. However, the danger is that not all contexts, students, or groups of students are the same. Different groups of students may respond differently to the same “proven” teaching approach. To some degree, teachers have to get to know their new students every school year. What has worked successfully in the past does not guarantee success in the future with different students. Therefore, experienced teachers continually go through the self-efficacy growth cycle as they learn to adapt and adjust for new groups of students. The following account is Jane’s story of adjusting expectations and responsiveness to different groups of students. Essentially, the solution Jane learned was to remain flexible to the individual needs and learning styles of students every new school year. Through intentional practice, it has become easier for Jane to “get to know” her new students and adjust her instruction for them. Specifically, she stated:

Well, one of my first years, I realized it wasn't working. What I'd done the previous year **[The Gold Standard]** wasn't working, **[Challenge]** and I tried so hard to make it work and I got super frustrated. **[Dissonance]** And so, I'm not quite sure who said it... I remember hearing, "It's okay to change." **[Perspective]** Um. And so hearing from previous teachers... more experienced teachers... and even I think we probably brainstormed some. "Okay, what does... what works with this? This particular group of students." **[Perspective]** I was not able to do that easily. But, I think what

helped me be able to do that was I looked at the kids as individuals, **[Perspective]** and I saw them... okay this student loves playing soccer. Okay, we're going to relate everything to sports. **[Teacher Behavior Change]** And, and that, I saw the change in that one student. **[Initial Positive Outcomes]** And I think that gave me the courage to go, "Okay, maybe we can, you know, what does /this/ student like?" **[Initial Self-Efficacy Spike]** And we were able to kind of mold that year, uh, a little more... uh, specific to their needs. **[Intentional Practice]** ...Then that took several years of uh, understanding... it wasn't me... it was me knowing my students well enough and what they connected with so that I could help them in the way that they needed it. **[Perspective]** That took a while. **[Intentional Practice]**

After illustrating the full self-efficacy growth cycle through individual teachers' specific stories, this section will now address each component of the cycle in greater detail. Thus, each component will include a composite description, which combines insights from all participants.

Stage One: The Gold Standard

The Gold Standard refers to "something that is considered to be the best and that is used to judge the quality or level of other, similar things" (Merriam-Webster). All of the participants spoke about having high expectations for themselves. Many participants described themselves as perfectionists, striving for flawlessness in their teaching. Reese stated that she went into her first year of teaching thinking she needed to have every lesson perfect. Allegra shared her desire for more constructive feedback during her college practicums, stating, "I know there's more. I know I can be better." Cheryl shared her desire to be like a veteran teacher she had observed who modeled seamless, deep, unhurried lessons.

Participants further explained excellence as dependent on outcomes. By measuring success on whether students understand and show learning, teachers depend on student growth to reach The Gold Standard. Not reaching The Gold Standard results in frustration with oneself. Participants shared that they took students expressions of, “I don’t understand” as a reflection of failure on their part to effectively teach.

Jane added her insights by talking about the pressure she feels to attain The Gold Standard after a successful teaching year in which she received extremely positive feedback from parents, students, and colleagues. Jane explained that she feels like she has to keep up The Gold Standard according to other’s perceptions of her past success.

For experienced teachers transitioning to SCS for the first time, the expectation for excellence is based on prior successful teaching. Therefore, transition teachers enter the SCS context with the expectation that they will be able to effectively manage students and teach for student understanding, just as they were able to in their prior context. However, since the context and students are entirely unique, this expectation is often quickly shattered when experienced teachers discover that their competence does not automatically transfer to the new context. The next section, Teaching Challenges, addresses the harsh realities of teaching that contrast The Gold Standard.

Stage Two: Teaching Challenges

Participants described Teaching Challenges in the following categories: classroom management, student learning, workload, context limitations, and gaps in knowledge or skills. Classroom management challenges appeared more frequently for new teachers and transition teachers, although all participants reflected on facing this challenge at some

point in their teaching career. Experienced teachers talked about classroom management as a significant challenge in their first few years of teaching and in their first few years transitioning to SCS. Even though veteran teachers claimed they could “take care of” management, some also admitted that it remained a valid challenge requiring ongoing intentional practice. This was evident both verbally and in teachers’ self-efficacy surveys.

Challenges with student learning emerged as teachers described the reality of unsuccessful lessons. Students verbally stated that they didn’t understand during a lesson. Or, test results showed that students didn’t grasp the material as the teacher had anticipated. The root problem for students’ lack of understanding seemed to be students’ English as a Second Language characteristic. Nevertheless, new teachers and transition teachers viewed the problem as a direct reflection of their ability to effectively teach.

Workload was a significant challenge for participants. The general consensus was that teaching required an intense, fast paced workday coupled with a weighty amount of evening or weekend preparation and grading. This physical amount of work squeezed out margin for family and friends, sleep, and rest/recreation. Teachers who had not yet introduced balance as an intentional practice described being utterly exhausted physically and mentally. Even those actively working on creating more balance in their lives still struggled to some degree with too much to do and not enough time.

Context limitations included limited time and large class sizes. Limited time was described primarily in terms of short class time to cover content with students. Participants in middle school and high school concurred that they desired longer teaching blocks to go more in-depth with content. Teachers explained that shorter class periods

limited their ability to both cover quantity and to go deep with content. Participants spoke about large class sizes limiting their ability to effectively teach. Teachers contrasted large classes with either smaller classes in previous years or prior schools. The main concern participants shared was that they felt restricted in meeting the needs of ESL learners with large classes because they were unable to effectively provide more individualized support. Larger classes also added a significant amount of grading, particularly at the high school level.

The final category of challenge was knowledge or skill gaps. New teachers in particular spoke about reaching a limit with their toolbox and simply not knowing what else to do. Regarding classroom management, new teachers stated that they would often try everything they knew for a classroom problem and still were unable to make headway. Transition teachers talked about being completely unaware of how to teach their well-known content areas to ESL students. The challenge for these participants was simply not knowing or not having skills in specific areas, namely classroom management and ESL teaching.

Stage Three: Dissonance

This stage represented a wide spectrum of dissonance, defined as “a lack of agreement” (Merriam Webster) between teacher’s expectations (The Gold Standard) and reality (Teaching Challenges). This occurred when participants became aware of the gap between what they had envisioned in their mind and how reality actually played itself out. Sunny described this so well, stating:

Like on those days where it doesn't matter what management technique you use... it's not working or, or when everyone doesn't get, you think a lesson is going to be so great and in your head you see it going so great and then it's just a nightmare because they can't handle it.

At a low level, teachers talked about tension, surprise, confusion, and uncertainty. When the gap was wider, teachers used the terms frustration, irritation, shock, low confidence, disillusionment, feeling overwhelmed, and feeling discouraged. At the most intense level, participants used the terms powerlessness, questioning/doubting oneself, "confidence at negative 20", burnout, and crisis. One participant shared how colleague friends and herself had experienced dissonance.

I mean everyone has them where you're just like, "I never should have become a teacher." Or "Why did I ever become a teacher?" Or like, "Is this the right place for me?" So it's like you do have moments where your confidence is totally back to negative twenty.

As mentioned in earlier sections, results indicated that some participants appeared to get stuck in dissonance. This passive stagnation appeared to be a result of dependence on external factors. Remaining in a constant state of colossal dissonance is no easy task. Thereby, it makes sense why participants talked about coping mechanisms they used to deal with dissonance. New teachers spoke in-depth about operating from a survival mode in which they tried to make it through one day at a time. Survival had no high expectations; rather it consisted of sticking to the basics and trying to keep one's head above water. Some teachers shifted the culpability onto students or administrators with "I can't because" statements. In essence, these teachers disclosed their dependence on their students, administrators, or external factors to close the dissonance gap for them. Hence, a sense of powerlessness overshadowed these teachers when external challenges

persistently presented themselves. Still other teachers shared that they re-adjusted or lowered their expectations (lowering The Gold Standard). It should be noted that this later coping mechanism could serve as a beneficial response in cases where the teacher professed perfectionism as their Gold Standard. Whether helpful or maladaptive, these coping mechanisms permitted teachers to continue teaching day after day in a context with unrelenting Teaching Challenges.

Stage Four: Perspective Shift

Moving out of dissonance generally required an active change of thinking, initiated by the teacher. However, participants also gave many examples of external supports, such as encouragement from principals or colleagues, which also facilitated a change in perspective. Perspective shifts were described as either a return to one's original purpose or a complete change in one's perception of a given situation.

Highly efficacious teachers explained their use of internal cognitive processes in detail. Processes that were identified in this study included: self-regulation, self-reflection/self-critiquing, cognitive flexibility, growth mindset, intentional focus on positive, reminding oneself of calling or commitment, and mental models. Mental models included remembering past success and remembering past growth cycle experiences (or remembering prior "bounce backs" from low confidence). Each of these are described in greater detail in the next section under Research Question Three, "How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?"

Teachers stuck in dissonance benefited from borrowing someone else's perspective. Participants shared many examples of a principal or colleague saying something to them that changed the way they viewed a specific challenge. From an administrator saying, "No, you can. I know you can" to a colleague's encouragement, "I see you are feeling burnt out. What can we do about that?" participants latched onto these messages of hope for positive change. Participants reported almost life changing epiphanies when principals spoke messages of, "I know you can teach [redacted], I hired you", "Stop, do you know what your kids need? Then, do it!" and "It's ok to change [be flexible]."

First year teachers mentioned additional external influencers on their perspective, including the power of successful lessons and student responsiveness. Success following on the heels of teaching challenges strengthened teachers' mental model of "I can most of the time" beliefs. Teachers were also moved out of discouragement or frustration when students did something sweet, kind or loving toward the teacher. These factors had the impact of reminding teachers, "Oh, that's why I'm here" or "It's worth it."

Stage Five: Teacher Behavior Change

The natural next step from a change in perspective is a change in behavior. Teacher Behavior Change emerged as a remarkably active phase. Teachers in this stage are working exceptionally hard to make changes. Participants discussed adjusting, adapting and being flexible regarding their teaching approaches. Areas of flexibility included: lesson pacing, quantity of content, format of lesson delivery or student practice, and change of setting. For example, a high school teacher talked about an outside

scavenger hunt in which students worked with a partner to find clues. This teacher shared that one particular class simply needed to move around a lot to learn better. Regarding ESL teaching, many participants mentioned giving students twice as much time to complete projects or stopping frequently during instruction or even assessments to explain unfamiliar vocabulary terms. For classroom management, teachers shared their stories about learning how to connect and build a relationship with challenging students. One teacher expressed her perspective shift of changing from trying to manage behavior to trying to understand the root cause of the student's actions.

It was common for participants to talk about not knowing what to change. In these situations, teachers shared valuable strategies to find solutions. Teachers who felt they had a growing toolbox of best practices described going fishing in their toolbox for a different approach. Teachers also experimented with trial and error. This was by far the most common strategy for teacher behavior change. In trial and error, teachers tried out a new tool and self-reflected on the results. If the tool yielded successful results with a particular group of students, the teacher kept using the tool. Sometimes the selection of a new tool was informed by knowledge of best practices. In other cases, it was something borrowed from a colleague or even creatively inspired by the teachers themselves. In addition, teachers actively sought advice, feedback, and ideas from others. Teachers shared examples of asking their principals for advice and asking colleagues to observe them. The crucial premise of moving through Teacher Behavior Change appeared to be more about embracing change than necessarily finding the perfect tool to improve teaching. However, locating a hand tailored solution to complement a Teaching

Challenge did appear necessary for sustaining change and for obtaining consistent results. This is explained below under Intentional Practice.

Stage Six: Intentional Practice

In the Intentional Practice stage, teachers have identified specific solutions to specific challenges. The important elements in Intentional Practice were 1) intentionality, 2) practice, 3) time, 4) experience, and 5) self-reflection/self-critiquing/self-evaluation. Practice alone did not yield results, as it needed to be intentional, specific, and a complementary fit to the Teaching Challenge. Participants discussed planning ahead to proactively address problems. This required “knowing what I need to do” before the challenge has a chance to present itself. Then teachers practice by implementing the change/strategy/solution and studiously refining it through observation of student responsiveness and self-reflection. Participants familiar with this stage described steady growth over time leading to closer precision to the intended goal. Interestingly, participants consistently identified the same set of specific solutions to specific Teacher Challenges. In essence, teachers had discovered the solutions to their own challenges. Participants described putting these into practice with precision and intentionality. These are noted in a detailed chart in Chapter 5.

Stage Seven: Equilibrium

This stage involves teachers’ sense of the gap closing between The Gold Standard and Teaching Challenges. This is essentially the “Nirvana” state of feeling blissful and contented, described by teachers as, “I’ve got this.” However, it is far from

passive; rather teachers used the terms of “life-long learning”, “keep learning”, and “self-evaluation.” Although teachers feel a sense of arrival at this stage, they are still persistently working at improvement. Yet, it’s not a grueling struggle. The difference is that teachers operating in this stage 1) understand the problem, 2) know the solution, and 3) are seeing consistent positive results from their efforts. Participants discussed seeing growth in students and themselves. Participants talked about making positive, influential connections with students that minimized classroom behavior issues. Positive outcomes also included finding more life-work balance to handle the workload. Teachers in this stage described feeling affirmed, gratified, and deeply fulfilled as teachers.

Stage Eight: Self-Efficacy Growth

When participants were able to experience consistent positive results from their Teacher Behavior Changes and Intentional Practice, they described feeling more confident. Teachers self-assess their competence to handle the teaching task (or challenge) higher than before, which is the very definition of self-efficacy growth (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

This stage is not stagnant nor an arrival destination. Teachers move through the cycle for every new teaching challenge they face. Achieving a higher level of confidence and competence creates a new Gold Standard. However, this time the standard may reflect a teacher’s actual living and breathing teaching reality. As is the very nature of the teaching profession, there is bound to be some new challenge that even the most experienced veteran teacher may experience some level of tension as they work through the new learning curve.

Research Question Three:

How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?

Cognitive processing determines what information is attended to and remembered, what information is considered credible, and how information is appraised (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This section demonstrates how participants encountered shifts in their perspective by thinking about information (challenges) in another way. Participants gave attention to their own thinking and actions, embracing alternative thoughts and behaviors for the situation (cognitive flexibility). Participants reminded themselves of important information and experiences they had lost sight of (mental models). They gave attention to some information over other information (focus on positive). Teachers evaluated information and gave deliberate attention to their own behavior (self-reflection/self-critiquing, self-regulation). Participants also appraised challenges as growth opportunities instead of viewing them as innate failures that couldn't be overcome (growth mindset).

Cognitive Flexibility. An essential part of changing one's perspective is to be aware that alternative thinking and behavior are viable options in any situation. Cognitive flexibility first requires attention to one's current thinking or behavior. Then, one must be cognizant of alternative perspectives or behaviors. Finally, one must embrace the alternative and start thinking or behaving in accordance. Reece, a first-year teacher, spoke quite candidly about her struggles with teaching and a revelation she experienced

in her thinking. She realized that she had accepted a mindset that she wouldn't be successful or have high confidence because it was her first year. She handled the dissonance by "giving herself grace." When she became aware that this was her mindset, she quickly rejected it for an alternative perspective she utilized regularly in other aspects of her life, a growth mindset. Reece instead chose a new perspective, namely that she could grow professionally and experience success even as a new teacher. Specifically, she shared the following.

This weekend was the first, because I think I've been very open as to how hard it's been. And I think I've been very open as to frustrations that I've had... This weekend I was just really thinking about it. And I don't even remember how it hit me, but it hit me like a rock. I was just (claps) I can't, what have I done? I cannot; I guess I need to give myself grace in this, that and the other but like, it can be okay; I can grow now! The next lesson can be better. I can have a good lesson! And so, yeah, I think that that's... yeah. My confidence. Or at least just given me an opportunity to build confidence.

Growth Mindset. This perspective views every challenge as an opportunity to grow. Failure does not exist because change and growth are always options. Rather than innate skills people just have or don't have, success is something that can be learned. Therefore, lack of success is simply part of learning and growing. Reece shared her story of changing her fixed mindset to a growth mindset. Instead of thinking she was a poor teacher when students didn't understand or simply not capable of teaching well, Reece realized she could think, "I can" because there are things she could do to make it better. She voiced:

I do focus on my teaching, but because I focus so much more on the student learning and I, I guess I evaluate success based on whether they learned...Which I think is a good focus in that this really is about our

students, but if we dwell too much on that, then there comes a, this, "I'm not good enough; I'm not capable of this, I can't do anything to make it better." And, if that becomes the mindset, then, as much as I wanted them in the growth mindset, I've just turned off my growth mindset. And so, that was something that really hit me this weekend, was if one student is not understanding, or two students are not understanding, am I writing it off as "I'm not a good teacher; I can't do this? Done, end of question." or, "it's my first year, it's going to be bad. Done. End of question. Done. I can't be confident because I'm a first-year teacher. It won't go well because..." you see that mindset. And so as much as we preach it...

As a teacher with over a decade of experience, Sunny disclosed that a growth mindset is essential throughout one's teaching career. She explained that the teaching profession constantly presents changes and new challenges. Teachers must be willing to continually change and grow. Sunny shared her insight that the opposites of growth, stagnation and resistance to change, is the perfect path to boredom and low self-efficacy. She expressed the following:

I love learning, like I would be totally pursuing a million masters if I had time. And I think, if you're a teacher you're a lifelong learner, and that's key. You have to keep learning. You can never be this person who is like, "I'm done". Like I said it's back to that it's not stagnant. It's growing and changing and that makes it interesting. I think if you let it stay stagnant you're going to be bored and lose your confidence... Because kids change, times change, everything changes, and so if you just choose to stay in your little "this is how I've always done it, I'm not going to change" then you're either going to get bored or overwhelmed or not be able to reach and that's going to affect your confidence for sure. 'Cause the kids won't like it, or won't be in tune with it, or it's just not going to be what they need and administration will, you know, you got to go with it, you got to!

Focus on Positive. In the face of discouraging challenges, one participant shared a strategy of focusing on the positive. Misty discussed how she intentionally looked for anything positive surrounding the situation and kept her focus on that. In giving special

attention to positive elements, Misty also intentionally minimized her focus on teaching challenges. She shared the following:

... Looking for the positives every day and not really necessarily focusing on my job. I'm coming to do my job, but I'm looking for things that are positive along the way.

Misty further explained that she looked for positive elements in general with or without connection to her actually teaching responsibilities. She emphasized that focusing on something positive balanced out the negative challenges so that not everything seemed negative.

Well, like even, just outside of my job. So, I see a teacher, how can I encourage her? Or, oh look there's a great lunch today! Just, anything that is positive, because if you dwell on the negative and not loving the position that you're in, then everything looks negative. But if you can see some positive...

Self-Regulation. In self-regulation, teachers give deliberate attention to their own behavior. One participant in particular, Allegra, shared her strategy of self-regulating her emotional state when she feels frustrated, overwhelmed, or discouraged during a lesson. She explained how she presses “pause” on her instruction, takes deep breaths, and presses “restart” with a fresh, calm, “I can do this” perspective. Although this strategy appears more physiological than cognitive, Allegra expressed that deep breathing allows her to refocus on her instructional goals instead of the teaching challenges. She stated, “I think I just, take a deep breath. Try to focus on, okay I have to do this...” Allegra shared the following example of a typical challenging lesson with students and how she practiced self-regulation.

And, the kids were just, it felt like I was talking to a wall. They weren't listening, they were talking, they were interrupting. They do, I call it, they "miss" me too much, where they do "miss, miss, miss," ooh it drives me nuts. And they won't raise their hand or they'll walk over to me "Miss, miss, miss!" "No, we sit down we raise our hands," Like we've been talking about it a lot and it's still a problem... They are just not paying attention, they're not trying... Oh, it's frustrating. So thank God for [redacted – teaching colleague]. She was in the room and she saw me and she goes "you're frustrated, this is why I'm here. I can take this part." I was like, oh thank God. So I sat down, took some deep breaths, and then she taught for a while. All I needed was like, five minutes and then I was okay and then we kept going. And, eh, it wasn't great but we got through it. And it wasn't the worst thing ever.

Allegra clarified that taking natural breather breaks between classes is difficult due to back-to-back classes most of the day. Furthermore, the four-minute transitions between classes don't allow for taking deep breaths since she is technically responsible to supervise students and prep for an incoming class. Therefore, she often feels frazzled during lessons and more easily overwhelmed with student management or learning challenges. A pause and deep breathing help Allegra regain perspective.

I just need a little time sometimes, and I don't have time cause my preps are at the end of the day and like I said I have four minutes between classes and kids are coming in asking me questions and telling me about Greek gods and I don't have time to be like, "okay, it's going to be okay." So sometimes we have to stop things and I just have to take that time.

Allegra also shared that she often has her entire class practice deep breathing with her. As she models an effective strategy to self-regulate emotions and stress, students learn and practice the strategy along with her.

And I make the kids do it with me too. But like, if I need one maybe some of them need some and I think it's good for them to learn how to deal with emotions. And that's me dealing with emotions. To watch me deal with them properly I think is good.

Self-Reflection. All of the participants mentioned self-reflection to some degree.

Self-reflection refers to teachers' deliberate attention to their behavior in the classroom.

Dee, a teacher in her second year, provided an especially insightful description of how she learned to self-reflect. One powerful influence was the inclusion of frequent self-evaluations in her university training program. Dee shared her experience with a university professor who used modeling and think-aloud reflection to help her develop self-critiquing. She shared:

The way that a lot of my courses were structured, my teachers would first introduce the new concept or topic by treating us like we were the students, and then teaching it as if it were just a normal lesson, and then kind of step back and say, "What did you notice? What worked well, what didn't work well?"

Dee also shared how ongoing practice with reflection helped to solidify the skill. The practice of doing reflections over and over again for every lesson made the self-critiquing a habit.

We had to do a lot of self-evaluations during my teacher education program. And that was one of the things that there were sometimes right in the moment where it was, "Oh, this is great." But there were sometimes in the moment where it was, "Are we doing another one? We just did one." But the thing... just getting in the habit of doing it constantly kind of helped to solidify and realize now that I'm actually in front of the classroom, teaching actual students on a regular basis, and its consistent. Like now I've been able to be like, "Oh, now I know why..." even though we probably didn't see it as beneficial. Whereas now, I can constantly see that.

Dee went on to talk about how principal feedback during her student teaching and first year teaching further developed this skill. This feedback was more of an ongoing dialog between Dee and the principal observing and providing feedback. She expressed:

And another benefit for me was I student taught here. So [redacted – principal] observed me and did feedback when I student taught. So once I became the teacher, I was a lot more comfortable already in my relationship with [redacted – principal], so then it wasn't so much like, "Oh my goodness, [redacted – principal] seeing me as a teacher," like, [redacted – principal] going to think I'm a bad teacher or I don't know what I'm teaching. It was more like, "[redacted – principal] here to say what I've done well and how I can work on that." And we can talk about it together. And I can tell [redacted – principal], "When you came in for that lesson, I think this went really great. You don't know this, because you don't know what the plan was, but this went terribly... like, the wrong way." And just being able to process that.

Frequent self-evaluations and two-way dialog with an observer were catalysts in teaching Dee to process what went well and what didn't constantly throughout a teaching day. Dee shared that she took ownership of self-reflection as something she could do to improve her practice, whether or not someone was observing her instruction. She shared how she realized with principal observations that the principal only saw part of a lesson, and she as the teacher had a more in-depth understanding of the lesson and could provide herself with meaningful appraisal. She admitted that owning self-evaluation took some getting used to, as she initially depended on others to point out aspects she could improve upon. Specifically, she stated:

Part of it was getting used to having to think about my own work and not just waiting for someone else to give their feedback. Because I'm there, teaching every day, and they're not in there every day. So, they might happen to come in one the best day of the school year, the best lesson taught. And that's great. But also like, in those moments when I know how it was supposed to go, and then how it actually worked with my students in that moment, being able to take the time and say, "Why did this work well? Why did this not work well? What can I do the next time I teach this subject? What can I do tomorrow to go back and try to fill in the gaps of what we missed?" I just, just that constant reflection. Not just waiting for someone else to come and say, "Okay, you need to think about this."

Mental Models. These structures of knowledge are stored in an individual's memory system as categorized "picture files" of past and future situations. As individuals actively observe their current situation, they compare it to previous experiences and then construct a mental solution for the future (Ruff & Shoho, 2005). Similar experiences strengthen a mental model, while opposing experiences may bring the model into question. The process of utilizing an abstract memory system of past events is beneficial for reminding oneself of previous knowledge, that has been forgotten or become out of focus in the present situation.

Mental models allow teachers to visualize future success based on prior success, and thereby disregarding the present lack of success. Participants described activating this by reminding themselves of prior successful teaching experiences. Sunny explained how a mental model of two years of successful teaching in the States helped her put her transition challenges into perspective as learning curves instead of teaching failures.

I think, like for the poor teachers who come here and this is their first year teaching... Like, at least when I came I knew I could... like she said, you knew you could do it and so it wasn't the first of the first of the first. It was like, "no, I've done this. So it's not me, it's everyone around me... they're all wrong." [laughter] But, I mean like, you knew you could at least handle it. Where, like, if I had come here my first year I don't know that I would've stuck with it. 'Cause it's just like, "I don't know, can I do this?" ... "maybe?"

In Sunny's discussion, she expressed concern that first year teachers likely have not yet developed a mental model of prior success, and therefore may have more difficulty creating mental solutions for future success.

Participants discussed reminding themselves of their "calling" to be a teacher. This abstract model included teachers' memories of their decision to become teachers,

people who had encouraged them to be teachers, or how they felt about teaching “in their bones.” Jane shared that her parents always thought and told her that she would be a teacher. Allegra said that she didn’t know what else she would do if she wasn’t a teacher. All of the participants emphasized that they genuinely loved and enjoyed teaching. Sunny expressed this mental model as, “Reminding yourself, ‘Yes I am gifted at this, I’m called to this’ ... Like, I know I’m called to teach, it’s in my bones.”

While remembering one’s calling to teach activates powerful emotional memories, participants also discussed instances when even these models were put into question. Participants described intense emotional struggles with present situations that completely overpowered any mental models about calling, destiny, or passion. In these instances, participants talked about reminding themselves of commitment to the teaching contract they had signed. As an international school requiring multi-year contracts, this meant that teachers at SCS might return to teach the following year out of pure obligation, even if they were not emotionally excited about it. Jane shared her story of staying on another year out of commitment and obligation when she felt like leaving. Sunny also candidly reflected on her traumatizing first year at SCS and the powerful influence of remembering her contract commitment. “I did it [stayed] simply out of contract. It was ALL contract. So, I had determined to meet my two-year contract and then I was going to leave. So, it was duty.” Even though Sunny ended up teaching at the school for over a decade, she initially returned to complete a second year only because of the multi-year contract.

While teachers initiated all of the cognitive processes identified above, reminders from others did not require any active thinking on the part of the teacher. However, a relationship of trust with the administrator or colleague was essential for teachers to embrace the alternative perspective that was shared with them.

Results Summary

Chapter four reports the findings of this phenomenological study on the factors, cognitive processes and development process of teacher self-efficacy. Triangulation of data included self-efficacy surveys, focus groups, personal interviews, and case study profiles, all combined into a composite description of common themes. The following summarizes the main findings.

Self-efficacy surveys served to identify highly efficacious teachers for follow-up personal interviews. Length of teaching experience did not necessarily correspond to higher self-efficacy in every individual case. However, there was a general trend of lower self-efficacy among first year teachers and remarkably high self-efficacy in selected experienced teachers, who were then selected as case study profile examples. This data source was also helpful in more precisely describing the self-efficacy perceptions of individual teachers in the case study profiles. Throughout the analysis of the data, it was helpful to connect specific teacher perceptions, cognitive processes, growth development stages, and decisions/behaviors back to participants' levels of self-efficacy. This enabled me to observe that teachers with higher self-efficacy had developed more mental models

to handle dissonance, were more aware of specific solutions to teaching challenges, and had more intentional practice with those solutions.

Focus groups highlighted qualitative differences among the perceptions of new teachers, mid-range experience teachers, and veteran teachers. First year teachers experienced substantial dissonance between their expectancies and the challenges of workload, classroom management, and isolation. These teachers felt overwhelmed, powerless, and dependent on support in the form of verbal affirmation from others. New teachers also actively embraced learning and growth through self-reflection. Teachers with mid-range experience (2-13 years) encountered perspective changes through self-reflection and social persuasion from others. These teachers embraced change in their own teaching behavior and were intentional about connection and responsiveness to students. Veteran teachers (10-41 years) spoke about intentional practice regarding every aspect of their teaching. These teachers primarily utilized mental models of prior success and growth to handle new teaching challenges. Both Focus Groups 2 and 3, representing all teachers except novice teachers, emphatically identified trust relationships with administrators as the main deal breaker or maker for their self-efficacy and commitment to teaching at the school.

Personal interviews and subsequent case study profiles unmasked specific cognitive processes teachers utilized to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy. These included self-reflection, self-regulation, cognitive flexibility, growth mindset, focus on positive, and mental models. One-on-one conversations also revealed a full self-efficacy growth cycle, including eight stages: The Gold Standard, Teaching

Challenges, Dissonance, Perspective, Teacher Behavior Change, Intentional Practice, Equilibrium, and Self-Efficacy Growth. This further clarified self-efficacy doubt (as dissonance) as an integral part of self-efficacy growth.

A composite description of emerging themes revealed five major themes: Connection (to students), Support (verbal affirmation and trust), Knowledge and Growth (student growth, knowing what I'm doing, observation of colleagues), Balance (workload and life balance), and Gratification (affective state resulting from connection, support, growth, and balance). Teachers' intentional practice of connection, seeking support, growth, and balance resulted in self-efficacy growth.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of teachers regarding their self-efficacy development. This study aimed to identify perceptions of efficacy sources, to describe developmental processes guiding self-efficacy growth, and to reveal cognitive processes used by teachers throughout self-efficacy transformation. Through a Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, focus groups, interviews, and informal follow-up conversations, I discovered firsthand how teachers perceived the shaping process of their self-efficacy.

Chapter one established the importance of conducting a study on teacher self-efficacy and introduced self-efficacy as it relates to positive teacher and student outcomes. Chapter two staged two main theories relating to teacher efficacy and presented an integrated model as the basis for theoretical and conceptual understanding of the topic. Chapter three provided a rationale for a phenomenological methodology and explained each step of the research process. Chapter four described the results, organizing them overarching themes and tying findings directly to the three research questions. This chapter will connect the research findings from Chapter four back to literature theories in Chapter two. This chapter will also discuss practical supports for strengthening teacher efficacy, implications for educational leaders, and recommendations for future research.

Synthesis of Findings and Theoretical Connections

In conducting this study, I aspired to develop a rich understanding of the factors and cognitive processes that promote teacher self-efficacy. This study was advanced by analyzing interview data through the lens of reciprocal causation theory (Bandura, 1977, 1978), thereby embracing the interconnectedness among external challenges, internal perceptions and thinking processes, and transformation of teacher behaviors.

The present study reinforced empirical research by finding the emerging themes of Connection, Support, Knowledge & Growth, Balance, and Gratification to align in many respects with Bandura's (1986) four sources of efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and affective state.

This study contributes to our understanding of how self-efficacy develops by illuminating a self-efficacy growth cycle with eight stages: The Gold Standard, Teaching Challenges, Dissonance, Perspective, Teacher Behavior Change, Intentional Practice, Equilibrium, and Self-Efficacy Growth. This growth cycle supports Wheatley's (2002) beneficial doubt theory and research on efficacy malleability.

The study also revealed cognitive processes of self-reflection, self-regulation, cognitive flexibility, growth mindset, intentional positivity, reminding oneself of calling/commitment and mental models of prior success as catalysts in self-efficacy transformation. This finding supports Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) conceptual model of efficacy development, which emphasizes the significance of cognitive processes in self-efficacy development.

This section will explain how emerging themes and key findings align to, expand upon, or contrast with the existing body of research literature on teacher efficacy.

Research Question One:

How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the external and internal factors that shape teacher self-efficacy beliefs?

From the focus groups and interviews, five themes emerged to describe the factors that shape self-efficacy, including: connection, support, knowledge & growth, balance, and gratification. Participants described the theme of connection through relationship building with students and colleagues as the foundational teaching component that allowed everything else to develop. Support was described as “someone believes in you” and included verbal affirmation from others, trust and backing from administration, and a positive school climate. The theme of knowledge & growth combined the concepts of knowing content, learning from or sharing with others, and experiencing success in terms of seeing growth in students or self. Finding balance was an especially important theme that empowered teachers in burnout or considering leaving the teaching profession to renew passion and experience efficacy growth. The final theme of gratification includes passion, enjoyment, energy, love for teaching, and a sense that it’s all worth it. Gratification is the outcome of the other themes, meaning that connection, knowledge & growth, support, and balance help teachers feel gratified in their profession. The affective state of feeling gratified enhances teachers’ beliefs in their capability to be successful, thereby improving self-efficacy.

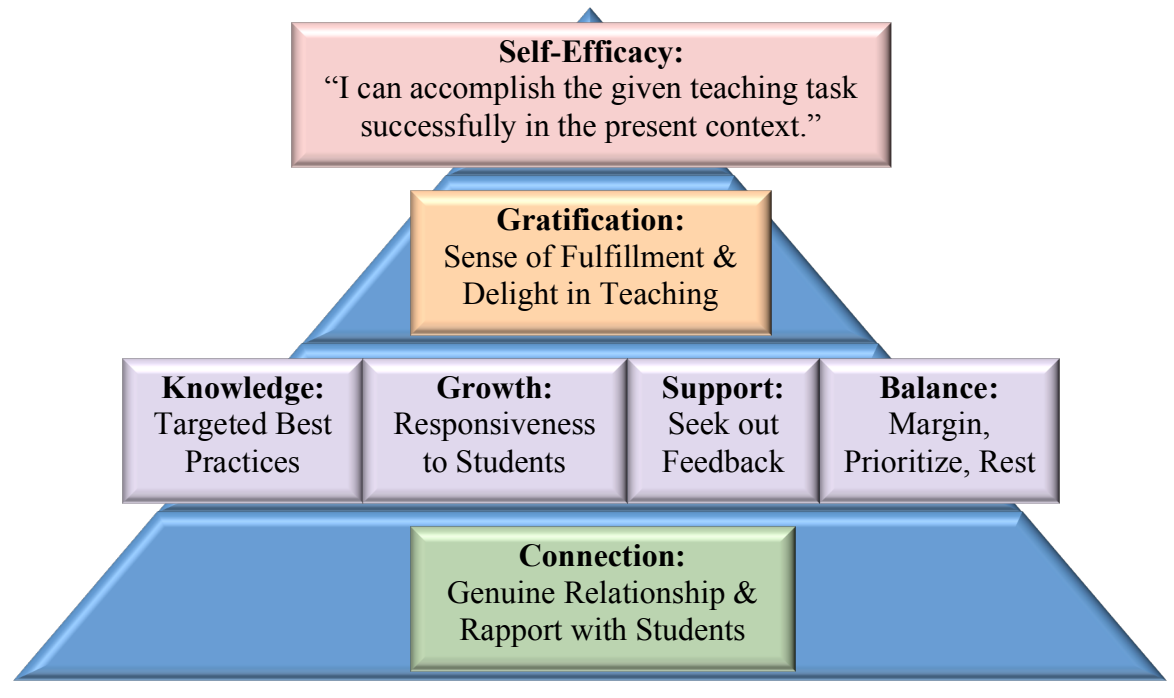


Figure 15. Themes of Self-efficacy Factors.

Connection

The theme of connection emerged as a powerful motivator for teachers to remain in their jobs despite challenges, be truly effective in both instruction and discipline, and truly enjoy their profession. This theme aligns to Bandura’s (1997) affective states, in which information is obtained from physiological and emotional states.

All of the participants, regardless of their years of experience, shared their belief that relationship building is at the core of good teaching. Reese, a first year teacher, shared her belief that connecting to students on a relational basis is a fundamental characteristic of a good teacher. Reese emphasized relationships as the priority in teaching, stating, “The relationship kind of starts everything. That also determines how your classroom is.” Sunny, a teacher in her 12th year, echoed these sentiments, stating,

“The love of the students is going to make you a good teacher.” This finding supports Bandura’s assertion that positive emotions may be interpreted as an indication of greater competence. Following this understanding, teachers’ positive affective state due to positive interactions with students has the effect of teachers feeling more efficacious.

Relationships with children and youth are not something to trifle with or something that can be pretended or forced. Participants emphasized the necessity of genuineness on the part of the teacher in consistency and loving students where they are. Misty referred to a conversation she had with a temporary substitute who didn’t want to cover classes for a teacher, stating that she hates kids. Misty reflected that this sentiment of not liking kids would not last long in the teaching profession and that loving kids is a requirement in teaching, stating, “You probably might need to love kids if you’re going to be a teacher at some point.” This negative example illustrates empirical efficacy research finding that attitude influences how individuals experience events (Forgas et al., 1990). Following Forgas et al.’s assertion, the adult’s negative attitudes toward children would lead to lower self-efficacy, while a positive attitude or mood would lead to higher self-efficacy. Unfortunately, since attitudes and moods are subject to change, self-efficacy could fluctuate significantly for any one individual teacher solely based on the teacher’s affective state.

A key finding from this study was the significance of connection for persistence in teaching. Loving students is a powerful motivator for teachers to remain in the teaching profession in the face of intense challenges. Sunny elaborated that this love for students became the prominent factor in a decision she made to stay in teaching when

facing a crisis point. She explained that there was a contemplation of leaving the teaching profession due to workload burnout and concerns about work-life balance with her family. Instead, Sunny found a way to create balance and keep teaching, “because I love my kids and I love this place. I wasn’t ready to let it go yet. Or stop teaching all together.” This finding adds a wealth of understanding to previous research on teacher efficacy and teaching challenges. Brinson and Steiner (2007) asserted that teachers with high self-efficacy handle teaching challenges differently than teachers with low efficacy. Specifically, highly efficacious teachers persevere more when facing problems. Genuine love for students may explain “why” they are willing to persevere through teaching challenges and/or “why” these teachers have high self-efficacy.

Another key finding was that understanding students contributed to higher self-efficacy. All of the participants described their self-efficacy as connected to “knowing” students. Participants discussed this knowing in terms of learning about students and understanding what approaches help students learn best. Sunny shared how her self-efficacy is remarkably higher in working with students she has previously taught, stating, “Because I know the kids. I know these kids, I’ve taught them.” Mary disclosed her lower self-efficacy due to not understanding a group of students. Specifically, she shared:

I think it’s important to get to know a group of students. I have a really tough group right now, where I don’t know that I fully understand them yet. And so as I get to know them...I learn what works for them and helps them understand and learn.

Knowing students is not merely a means to understanding “what works” with an individual student or group of students. Rather, it is an internal passion to connect with students by understanding who they are and what makes them unique. As a new teacher,

Reese spoke about her passion to know students as something that inspires her to teach everyday. She shared the following:

There's something that just brings me back every single day, and it's just that desire to want to get to know these students. I want to learn more about them. And I want to learn more about what makes them them...

Teachers commented that interaction with students was one of the aspects they enjoyed most about teaching. Misty shared that she enjoyed "just seeing the kids" and interacting with them everyday. Cheryl talked about connecting and interacting with her students as creating positive energy and cooperation in the classroom, stating:

I love it. I think there is an energy in the classroom that you find; well, I haven't found in many other places. There's this cooperative, kind of "we're in this together." I just, I love to be able to interact with students; to get to know them...

These findings continue to align to Bandura's research on affective states. These teachers experienced higher self-efficacy when they felt positive emotions around their interactions with students.

Along the same lines as the key finding of a correlation between connection with students and longevity, this study also revealed a correlation between longevity and higher self-efficacy. A few teachers who had taught in the same school context for many years brought a unique perspective to the power of relationship building with students. This perspective was unique among only teachers who had over ten years of experience at the school in this study. These veteran teachers talked about how rapport with students is forged much easier simply because the teacher has longevity in the school community. Longevity was described by these teachers in terms of putting down roots in a school community. Due to this longevity, the teacher has relationships with families, having

taught prior siblings, relatives, or the parents themselves. In some cases, teachers had taught students over multiple years, establishing relationships with many students. Participants explained that students have more trust and respect for teachers with longevity. Veteran teachers further asserted that this affects teacher self-efficacy because student trust and respect eliminates most discipline issues. This key finding on longevity supports Cheung's (2008) qualitative survey of Chinese primary teachers, which revealed that both length of teaching experience and respect from clients (students and parents) were significant sources of self-efficacy. The participants in this study illuminated Cheung's research by explaining that the act of putting down roots in a school community results in strong rapport with school families over time. The actual relationships with students and their families was what minimized discipline and strengthened teacher self-efficacy. Thereby, connection with students appeared to be the mediator between longevity and self-efficacy.

Yet another key finding regarding connection was the significance of positive impact for resilience, persistence, and self-efficacy. Participants shared their experiences of making a difference in the lives of their students by building relationships. Misty shared her story of helping a second grade student learn to read by demonstrating to the student that Misty believed in her.

I think I made a difference in quite a few of my students' lives last year. I think they feel valued. I think they feel like they can learn, 'cause sometimes you get them, and even in second grade this little girl felt like she couldn't read, but once she knew that [redacted teacher's name] believed in her, holy mackerel, she just was like, you know. And by the end of the year, she was like one of the rock star readers in my second grade.

In the same way, Mary also noted an example of significantly impacting a student's life through relationship. She explained that she was made aware of the impact through the student and parent sharing their appreciation to her when the student graduated from high school. Specifically, she elaborated:

I think especially in this context, that I've been able to reach individual students by seeking out those relationships. I think specifically to a girl I taught a few years ago who really struggled. She was really bright; she came from a difficult home situation, and she struggled to get work turned in. So she would just come to my room and work on stuff. Sometimes, I would help her with it specifically, and sometimes it would just be a place to be. But that relationship was so valuable to her and as she graduated both she and her father were so appreciative of that. So, I've just seen how I can have that specific effect and relationship with students and change what they love and do in the classroom environment.

For all of the teachers, caring about students was directly connected to why they have remained in teaching or want to continue teaching. In particular, teachers viewed the pressures and stressors of the teaching profession as less weighty in light of their genuine care for students and desire to make a positive difference in students' lives. This key finding aligns with Ashton and Webb's (1986) assertion that self-efficacy beliefs about one's ability to make positive impact supersede challenges. In fully understanding why this is, Goddard et al. (2000) and Goddard (2001) explained that successful teaching experiences relate to resilience and persistence in the face of difficulties. Therefore, prior positive impact on students encourages teachers to continue their efforts and push through challenges in order to replicate positive impact. The results of the present study add to this body of research by showing the importance of relationships with students. Connection was the teacher behavior creating and repeating positive impact outcomes, which further resulted in higher self-efficacy.

Support

The themes of affirmation and trust emerged from this study as powerful ways that school administrators influence teacher self-efficacy. The theme of affirmation aligns closely to Bandura's efficacy source of social persuasion, defined as positive verbal communication that strengthens beliefs in one's capabilities to perform a task (Bandura, 1997). The theme of trust aligns well to research on trust relationships between teachers and administrators.

Affirmation. One key finding regarding verbal support was the influence of verbal affirmation from principals, mentors, or colleagues in moving teachers out of dissonance and into embracing a perspective shift about their specific teaching challenge. Verbal affirmation proved especially helpful in cases in which teachers were experiencing self-doubt, discouragement, or a crisis point of wanting to give up. When teachers were thinking and saying, "I can't", verbal affirmation influenced them to view their challenges as less severe and view their ability to overcome those challenges as more possible. For example, Sunny shared an example of an administrator providing verbal affirmation when she was in a crisis point with teaching. She recalled that the administrator consistently responded to Sunny's "I can't do this" statements with affirmations such as "No you can. I know you can." This principal's expression of her belief in Sunny's capability convinced Sunny to persist through the challenges she was facing. This finding corresponds to Bandura's assertion that, "It is easier to sustain a sense of efficacy, especially when struggling with difficulties, if significant others express faith in one's capabilities than if they convey doubts (Bandura, 1997, p. 101).

This finding also supports Tschannen-Moran and McMaster's (2013) contention that social persuasion is especially critical in the presence of significant teaching challenges. Principals have an accepted place of influence to say, "I believe you can do this," which is embraced even when teachers are saying, "I don't know if I can do this" or "I can't do this." Curiously, this parallels participants' descriptions of telling their students that they believe in them to succeed even when students didn't believe in themselves.

Of special interest was that the lack of verbal affirmation resulted in teachers' perception of administrative indifference. This left teachers feeling undervalued and taken for granted by administration. Even if leaders genuinely valued teacher work and were deeply grateful, the missing outward act of something as simple as saying "thank-you" inadvertently gave teachers the impression of administrators viewing them as worker bees instead of human beings. This finding is supported by quantitative studies on leadership styles indicating that emotionally supportive leadership correlates to higher teacher efficacy (Ross & Gray, 2006; Littrell & Billingsly, 1994). This also expands prior research on efficacy by revealing how a lack of supportive leadership behaviors can negatively influence teacher self-efficacy.

Another finding that adds to prior research is that teachers placed more weight on affirmation from their principals than from colleagues. In fact, affirmation and a sense of "the principal has my back" trumped feedback from parents and students, whether positive or negative. The main reason participants gave for this dissimilarity was that the principal was the one who hired them and/or could fire them. However, this was only true for experienced teachers. Novice teachers, in contrast, made no distinction regarding the

source of verbal affirmation, whether from a principal, mentor, or colleague. New teachers were desperate for any verbal affirmation from anyone, clearly connecting verbal support to automatic increases in their self-efficacy. This finding is supported by multiple studies indicating that social persuasion is a significant source of self-efficacy, particularly for novice teachers (Klassen & Durksen, 2014; Moulding et al., 2014; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Whether novice or experienced teachers, the results from this study strongly suggest that administrator support does influence efficacy. This contradicts Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy's (2007) assertion that,

Neither novice nor career teachers seem to base their self-efficacy beliefs on the support of their administrators. Teachers form beliefs about their capability to impact student learning whether support from administrators is available or not. (p. 23)

One possible explanation for this difference is the context of the school in this study. For example, in my pilot study in a public school in Northwestern Montana, many career teachers described the formation of their beliefs in close alignment to the statement by Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy. These teachers did not look to or depend on administrators for their teaching efficacy. Conversely, the current study was conducted in a private, international school in the Dominican Republic with teachers originating from all over the United States. School culture could explain why teachers in the present study expressed a high level of dependence on their administrators to feel confident in their ability to successfully impact student learning. According to the researcher's observations, there does seem to be uniqueness in the school culture of an international school that may come into play. For example, in international schools, expatriate teachers

are distanced from many familiar support systems. From the researcher's perspective, this may result in expatriate teachers' need for additional emotional, social, and practical supports, especially if teachers lack language skills or cultural awareness to build their own support systems outside the school community. Naturally then, support would be expected from leadership within the school as the school would represent the expatriate's main support system, both professionally and personally. However, this should be noted as the researcher's own observation and projected explanation. Furthermore, regardless of whether teachers' self-efficacy dependency on school leadership is context specific or not, prior research does indicate that principals' emotional support of teachers is a significant predictor of teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction, commitment, intent to stay, stress and health (Littrell & Billingsly, 1994). Following this understanding, prior research supports the findings in the present study indicating that principal verbal affirmation has a significant influence on teachers' perceptions of their jobs and their intentions to stay at a particular school.

From the results emerged the importance of a zone of proximal development regarding feedback to novice teachers. Support from principals in the form of lesson feedback was deeply appreciated and helpful up to a point. When the feedback provided too many suggestions that were above the teacher's ability to practically implement, the feedback actually resulted in a sense of being overwhelmed and frustrated with oneself. Also, participants noted that a balance of praise and improvement suggestions made feedback the most beneficial for improving their competence and confidence. Praise alone without some correction was viewed as limiting the teacher's potential to grow.

This finding is supported by research indicating that school administrator feedback that is specific and action-oriented correlates to higher efficacy among the whole teaching staff (Ross & Gray, 2006; Brinson & Steiner, 2007). This finding also aligns with prior research indicating principals' provision of frequent, constructive feedback about teacher performance to significantly correlate to teacher growth (Littrell & Billingsly, 1994). However, the results from the current study expand these common feedback practices to include differentiated, proximal feedback appropriate to a teacher's current teaching capacity.

Novice teachers were also unique in their expressed desire for mentor colleagues. Mentors played a significant role in shaping their self-efficacy, although equally important was that a perceived lack of mentorship resulted in novice teachers struggling more with self-efficacy and a perception of isolation in the school community. This salient issue of isolation regarding novice teachers is supported by Tschannen-Moran's (2007) research indicating that mentor and colleague support and community support strongly influence novice teachers' self-efficacy. Experienced teachers didn't express this same need for mentorship or negative sentiment about isolation, which aligns to Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy's assertion that experienced teachers have adapted to work isolation and base their efficacy on other sources (2007). All participants agreed that truly effective mentorship was based on friendship, trust and vulnerability, and facilitation of self-critiquing and self-initiated problem solving. For example, Mary shared that she learned to self-critique through her mentorship relationship. Mary specifically stated:

She would say, "I'm going to talk through this, and tell me what you think in this scenario. "So she would explain the problem that was happening, or you know, something that she was curious how she could improve, and we would just talk through it. And as I watched her process verbally, I learned so much about teaching. And it was just, first of all friendship, second of all mentorship. That just really taught me "Here's how you teach." I think inherently she also taught me how to critique your own work. Uh, so it was I guess we were talking about a specific lesson, but a deeper level, she taught me to be reflective and evaluative.

Mentor partnerships that seemed forced, obligated, or simply lacking a comfort level of trust and vulnerability were described as completely ineffective. This supports prior research that trust relationships between mentors and new teachers significantly influence self-efficacy (Woolfolk Hoy & Spero, 2005). One might assume this relationship to be one way, ie. mentors impacting new teacher self-efficacy. Interestingly, results from the present study demonstrated that veteran teachers who viewed themselves as informal mentors and coaches experienced significant increases in their own self-efficacy as they coached younger teachers. These mentors explained that seeing how they could easily handle teaching tasks that were difficult and challenging for other teachers indirectly boosted their self-efficacy. This aligns to Bandura's (1997) research on vicarious experiences, in which teachers assess their own capabilities in comparison to those of others.

Trust. Trust relationships, particularly with administrators, emerged as a significant aspect affecting teacher self-efficacy. One key finding from this study was that teacher self-efficacy is connected to perceptions of trust regarding administrator's intentions. This aligns with Bryk and Schneider's (2003) research on relational trust, indicating that individuals discern the intentions of others and make a judgment regarding

their trustworthiness. Participants expressed that they were more self-secure and more readily embraced feedback when they believe that the administrator's intentions were to assist and support them. George, a veteran teacher, shared that administrative verbalization of "How can I help you?" resulted in positive affect toward the administrator. Believing that administrators are not looking to "catch the teacher", but rather to help them, puts the teacher more at ease to embrace feedback as a two-way dialog with the administrator. George shared a specific example in which administrative observations during his first few years helped to place some classroom challenges into perspective, putting George at ease in thinking the challenges were not "the worst thing." This perception emerged strongly from focus group sessions as multiple participants spoke in-depth regarding the importance of a relationship of trust with an administrator or mentor in order for feedback to be perceived as supportive and for it to be effective in boosting teacher self-efficacy. Since accurate knowledge of one's intentions may be difficult to discern, Bryke and Schneider explain that assumptions are made based on observable actions and non-verbal cues. Following this understanding, the importance of leadership behaviors become key in developing relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). This is further supported by research showing that principal supportive behavior predicts teacher trust in the principal (Tarter et al., 1989).

One might be tempted to assume that trust would only be directed towards the leadership figure, as is advocated in most current leadership theories admonishing leaders to be authentic, ethical, and "trustworthy." Not discrediting this focus on trustworthy leadership, the results from the present study contribute to our understanding of the

significance of trust from an entirely different angle. Participants conferred that perceiving that an administrator trusted them to teach was particularly powerful for their self-efficacy. Trust from colleagues and parents had some positive affect, though significantly underscored by trust from administrators. Participants spoke candidly about specific leadership behaviors and social persuasion that demonstrated their trust in teachers. This key finding aligns to Bryk and Schneider's (2007) assertion of mutual dependence between educational leaders and teachers. When principals demonstrate trust in teachers to carry out their part of the school mission, principals are in effect creating a safe place for teachers to embrace growth. The present study illustrated this as Dee shared her experience of perceiving trust through administrators giving her permission to try new strategies and not expecting the growth process to always look successful.

Specifically, she stated:

And... with the administrators. The administrators being okay with you trying new things, and it not working out how you hope it will. That's been really huge. Very big, and informing me as a teacher, because your administrator is going to trust you. And that trust makes your competence completely skyrocket, because they trust you know what you're doing in your classroom.

Jane shared an experience of an administrator demonstrating trust in her understanding of students' needs and her decisions to slow down the pacing guide to ensure student learning. When the principal reassured Jane that she trusted her to make those teaching decisions, Jane felt confidence in taking ownership of her classroom.

And I remember crying to [redacted principal name] and saying, "My kids, I can't... I'm staying up to date with the other class." [The principal] said, stop. [The principal] said, do you know what your kids need. And I said yes, they need this, this, and this. And [the principal] said, so do it. And I said, sorry, what? [The principal] said, do it. I hired you to teach.

And I said, oh, whoa, you trust me to teach. And it was just that push I needed to say, this is your classroom. Be a teacher. I have confidence in you because I hired you. And I think that made the way for me especially that first year here. To make mistakes and [the principal] be ok with them.

Cheryl shared how she perceived trust from her administrator when resource requests were approved without the administrator questioning her. She stated, “I didn't have to explain. And so, that was really encouraging and it showed that they trust me in my, in what I want to do in the class.” This example illustrates the second side of the interdependent relationship between principals and teachers. Bryk and Schneider (2003) explain that teachers are dependent on principals to provide the resources they need to teach. Therefore, when administrators provide these resources without questioning teachers, administrators build relational trust and also minimize the vulnerability teachers may feel in respect to their dependency.

Participants spoke about being trusted with student discipline and grading decisions. Teachers explained that support in these areas is important because an administrator may not understand the issue at the daily classroom level or understand the teacher's perspective in the situation. Participants revealed their conscientiousness regarding being questioned on their decisions and how that damaged the teachers' perspective of the principal's trust in them as a teacher.

All of the participants discussed how administrators demonstrate trust in them by backing them with parents. Teachers described administrators buffering them with parents. Sunny explained that certainty of administrative support with parents is especially important in the SCS school context because she feels great uncertainty that parents will support teachers regarding student discipline or grading. The sense that

“administration has my back” is critical for teacher self-efficacy when the common teacher experience at SCS is that parents often don’t side with teachers.

Teachers’ perceptions of a lack of backing not only has detrimental effects on teacher self-efficacy, participants disclosed their understanding of colleagues changing schools for this reason. One teacher shared:

Not necessarily at this school, but there are parents that pressure administrators. I mean we’ve seen it here and in the U.S. We’ve also seen, you know, students that are just totally disrespectful and um, I think when your administrator doesn’t support you as a teacher people want to leave. I haven’t ever really felt that but I know those are reasons why.

Participants shared further insight regarding how administrators can support and prioritize teachers. Teachers voiced their perception that administrators have a great deal of power to make the environmental setup more conducive for teaching and learning. Specific examples included scheduling (block scheduling instead of short frequent class periods), smaller class sizes, and minimizing extracurricular activity interference with learning time. Teachers summarized administrative support by stating their belief that supportive administrators try to make things better for teachers.

These key findings of teachers’ need for administrative backing and prioritization of the learning environment align again to the issue of teacher vulnerability and dependency on leadership to provide what they need to accomplish their teaching tasks. Without leadership support, whether that includes physical resources, verbal backing with parents, or logistical/practical instructional concerns, teachers actually can’t accomplish their part of the school mission successfully (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). As a researcher, I had initial assumptions of participants’ comments as “depending too much on

administration.” Now, in light of Bryk and Schneider’s work on mutual dependency, I see that teacher dependency and corresponding frustration from lack of administrator backing is actually an entirely legitimate issue affecting teacher self-efficacy.

Collective Efficacy. The climate, culture, and collective teacher beliefs in a school have a significant impact on the self-efficacy of individual teachers. Participants described both positive and negative examples of collective efficacy. In negative school climates, teachers felt discouraged and as if all their hope and optimism were sucked up by the pessimism of their colleagues. In positive school climates, teachers felt more passionate, capable as teachers, and truly enjoying their jobs. In positive school climates, there was strong colleague collaboration based on building on one another’s strengths. This finding aligns closely to Skaalvik & Skaalvik’s (2007) research indicating that school culture and colleagues’ self-efficacy strongly influence teacher self-efficacy. Furthermore, this supports Goddard and Goddard’s (2001) assertion that collective efficacy is a strong predictor of individual teacher efficacy. One implication for practice would be the extreme care in placing novice teachers or student teachers, having naturally vulnerable self-efficacy, in close proximity to highly efficacious *and positive* mentors.

Knowledge and Growth

The theme of Knowledge and Growth aligns in some respects to Bandura’s categories of mastery and vicarious experiences. The main reason I chose not to use the term mastery experiences for this theme is that “mastery” or “success” was not necessary to strengthen teacher self-efficacy. Participants described strengthening self-efficacy

through seeing signs of progress in students and themselves. Therefore, the building of self-efficacy was based more on evidence of improvement than on attaining results.

Knowledge. From the results of the study emerged the significance of teacher knowledge of curriculum content, on-the-job know-how, and learning from others through vicarious experiences. Whether high school specialized curriculum or elementary curriculum, all participants shared that their expertise in and experience with specific content and curriculum materials dramatically improved their self-efficacy. Therefore, when participants were assigned an unfamiliar content to teach or a new curriculum guide, teachers initially felt like a fish out of water. Typically, a year of using a new curriculum was enough to boost efficacy to where the teacher felt they at least had a handle on the content. This aligns to Tschannen-Moran et al.'s definition of self-efficacy as belief in one's ability "to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context (1998, p. 233). This prior literature emphasizes the importance of context and the specificity of the teaching task. The results from this study clearly illustrated this through experienced teacher's descriptions of low self-efficacy when they transitioned to a new school or were asked to teach a different content area.

Knowing the content is one thing, but knowing how to practically teach it requires something participants called "on the job training." This on-the-job training essentially consisted of time and practice. The end result of "knowing what I'm doing" is high self-efficacy in knowing one can practically implement "knowledge" in the reality of a teaching day. Sunny stated it in these terms, "I feel confident... because I've done it for such a long time, so I know I can do it."

Also regarding teacher knowledge, vicarious experiences were a powerful self-efficacy strengthener that emerged from participants' stories. Participants shared their positive experiences of learning and growing from observing colleagues. According to Bandura (1997), individuals assess their own capabilities in comparison to those of others. For example, Sunny shared how she has learned so much from observing colleagues and seeing good strategies. Sunny explained that she takes the strategies and implements them for herself or for coaching other teachers. Following Bandura's interpretation of vicarious experiences, Sunny had a perception that she could achieve the same results if she followed similar methods as those she observed. This significantly and positively impacted her self-efficacy.

Growth. A key finding from this study was self-efficacy growth based on visible awareness of students' growth and awareness of teacher self-growth. The results of this study revealed that teachers consistently connected their self-efficacy to whether students demonstrated understanding and progress. Participants went as far as to measure their own success as teachers based on student learning. Reese shared how her self-efficacy fluctuates based on students' grasp of the content she teaches, stating:

I do focus on my teaching, but because I focus so much more on the student learning and I, I guess I evaluate success based on whether they learned... And when a student says they don't understand, I just take it as a slam that I don't know how to teach them; and I don't know how to communicate the information in a way that they understand.

Results of this study also revealed that teacher self-efficacy grows when teachers are aware of themselves becoming more competent and capable. One key that pronounced this awareness for teachers was informal colleague mentorship relationships. Both

mentors and mentees expressed that they saw growth in themselves by either being mentored or by providing support to others. This finding aligns to multiple quantitative and qualitative studies indicating that mentors have a significant positive impact on teacher self-efficacy (Klassen & Durksen, 2014; Moulding et al., 2014; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001). Additionally, on the part of the mentor, Lev & Koslowsky (2008) found that teacher leadership positions strengthen self-efficacy for experienced teachers. Thereby, results from this study support literature indicating that informal mentorship relationships are highly beneficial to the self-efficacy of both mentee and mentor.

Balance

A key finding from this study was the importance of intentionally creating workload and work-life balance. The journey of finding balance begins with the sources that create imbalance in the first place. Participants identified internal perspectives and external challenges that lead to a sense of a heavy, overly demanding workload. The internal perspective is *The Gold Standard*, or superior quality in teaching. To describe this, multiple participants admitted that they were perfectionists. Participants talked about creating their own stress and pressure by having super high expectations for themselves, expectations for stunning lesson plans, amazing visual supports, and perfect lessons. The external challenges included grading and planning, large class sizes that limit a teacher's ability to respond to student learning needs, energy expended in a teaching day, and pressure to get students ready for the next grade. The combination of internal pressure for close to perfect teaching and external pressures that limit those ideals creates a sense of an all consuming, almost impossible workload to keep up with. Although teachers may

push through with sheer determinism and adrenaline, over time this degree of pressure takes its toll in the form of burnout. These findings align to literature indicating that novice teachers are more susceptible to fast burnout because of their unrealistic expectations (McDonald, 1991; Wheatley, 2002). Following this understanding, unrealistic expectations may be more of the culprit causing the imbalance than the actual teaching challenges.

Imbalance refers to too much of one thing at the expense of something else. Participants talked about work overload leading to sleep deprivation, lack of time for rest or recreation, and time with family and friends. Some participants spoke about the workload and stress level negatively affecting their health in significant ways. Teachers with children, especially, spoke about needing to scale back on work they take home on weekends so as to protect quality time with their families. Thereby, burnout for these teachers included physical and mental exhaustion, where participants felt frustrated, irritated, and too tired to “grade one more stack of papers.”

Teachers expressed a variety of ways they attempted to manage imbalance and burnout. These approaches included making significant external changes, including: scaling back to part-time, changing positions within the school, or leaving the school or teaching profession entirely. Even with significant external changes, some participants shared that they still needed to intentionally practice balance. One teacher did this by establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life. Participants who maintained their current positions utilized a variety of strategies to prevent or bounce back from burnout. These included: making work time truly productive, being realistic,

prioritizing, asking for help, and taking non-academic breaks with students to just have fun. For example, one teacher talked about setting boundaries around non-work times. These “off-limits” times include a certain amount of sleep each night, exercise, church activities, time with friends, and other re-creative activities. This teacher concluded that creating balance means being “okay” with putting work away to get a restful night’s sleep. Literature to support these findings includes Caprara et al.’s (2006) assertion that teachers with higher efficacy are more intentional about creating conditions that nourish and sustain their job satisfaction. The results of this study add to the literature by demonstrating that teachers’ intentionality in creating certain “balance friendly” conditions actually occurs first, and the outcome of this teacher behavior is what leads to self-efficacy growth.

Gratification

Participants spoke about being deeply fulfilled and finding great enjoyment in teaching. Gratification, as defined as delight and satisfaction, was a prominent theme that emerged from the results of this study.

Participants spoke about the specific aspects of teaching that they loved. Many participants expressed their delight in connecting with students, seeing students grow, learning and growing themselves, and being inspired by colleagues. Stating the belief that good teachers have a passion and love of the job, Sunny shared the following regarding her intense feelings about every aspect of teaching, “I love it. To the depths of my bones I just, it gives me joy. I find joy in grading papers. I find joy in putting up bulletin boards. I just love everything about it, like I love teaching.” Although all of the participants

expressed this theme in some way, gratification was most prominent among the most experienced teachers and teachers with the highest self-efficacy. This makes sense according to the pyramid conceptual diagram in which the other four themes (connection, growth, support, and balance) lead to gratification, which strengthens self-efficacy.

This theme corresponds in some respects to Bandura's "affective states" source of efficacy. Teachers described their sense of gratification as based on what inspired their passion as teachers. This aligns well with Bandura's assertion that the interpretation or cognitive processing of the state is more important than the emotional state itself. Still, the exact relationship between gratification (or affective states) and teacher self-efficacy is still not crystal clear.

Research Question Two:

How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic
describe how they develop self-efficacy?

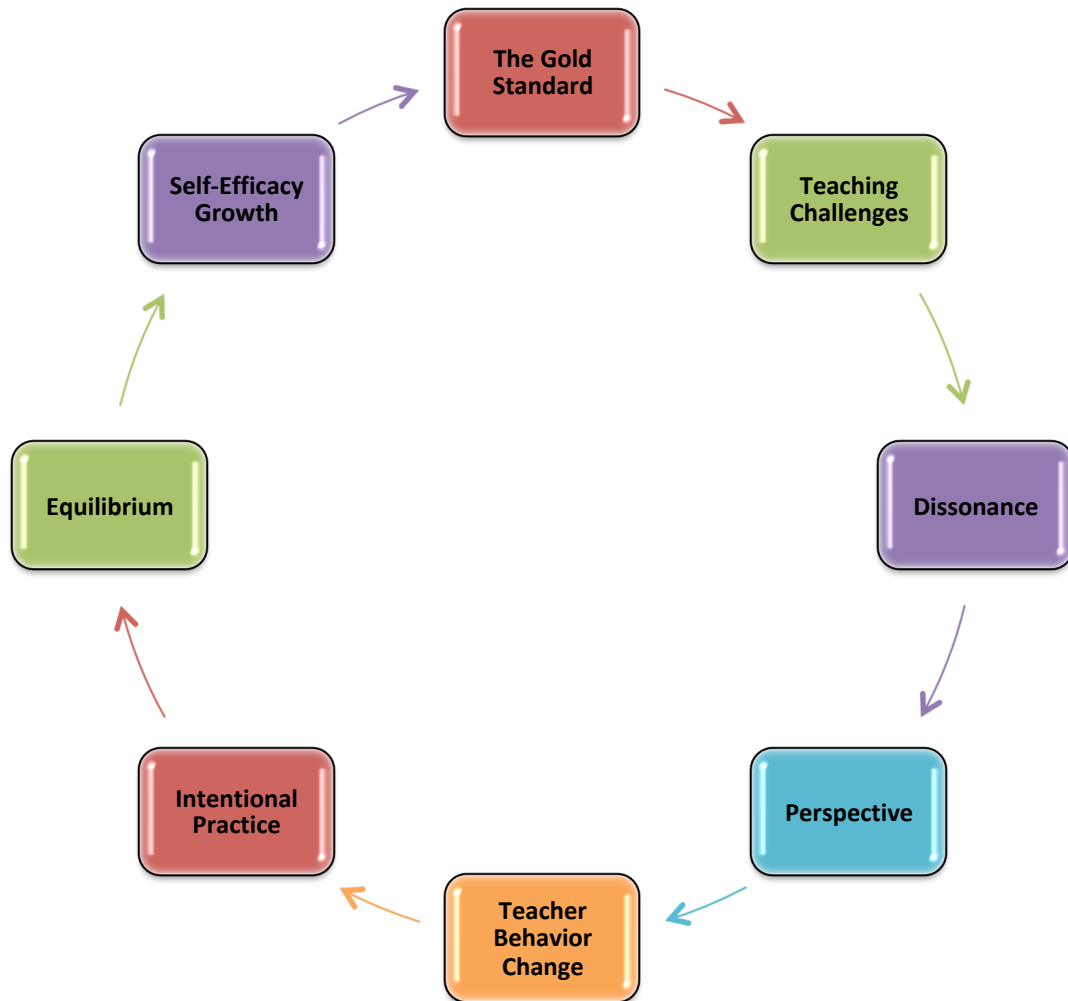


Figure 16. Self-efficacy Growth Cycle.

Participants described the process of developing self-efficacy as a growth cycle. This cycle, as depicted in the figure above, begins with *The Gold Standard*, which is an expectation of excellence or perfection in teaching that teachers set for themselves. Most

apparent among novice and transition teachers, this naïve optimism (novice) and overconfidence (transition) makes teachers highly susceptible to disillusionment when their internal set of goals quickly crashes with the reality of teaching (Wheatley, 2002).

Challenges present themselves in many forms, including: environmental limitations, learning curves, or a general gap between expectations and outcomes. Wheatley (2002) argues that challenges are helpful because they act to test and strengthen a teacher.

This creates a sense of *Dissonance* for teachers as they become aware of the disparity. Participants may experience dissonance on a wide spectrum, from slight tension to an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness. Literature asserts that some doubt and uncertainty is beneficial, if handled correctly, because it pushes teachers to an awareness of their need to grow (Settlage et al., 2009). Dissonance exists to foster growth and change, self-reflection, motivation to learn, and responsiveness to diversity (Wheatley, 2002).

Perspective enables teachers to handle dissonance in productive ways by introducing new ways of thinking about the challenges. This aligns with literature asserting that teachers must have a belief about how to address teaching deficits in order to be resilient to doubt. The key is teachers' knowledge that they can do something to improve the teaching challenge (Wheatley, 2002).

When teachers experience a change in perspective, the result is *Teacher Behavior Change*. Essentially, teachers alter something that is within their power to change that they believe will bring the actual reality closer to the ideal. This aligns to literature

documenting the importance of teacher behavior for self-efficacy (Chacon, 2005; Allinder, 1994; Podel & Soodak, 1993; Cousins & Walker, 1995). However, this literature presents self-efficacy as a predictor of teacher behavior. The results from this study showed that teacher behavior change is also a precursor for self-efficacy growth. In this way, self-efficacy growth is cycle in which positive outcomes become predictors. Changes at this level may be intentionally and specifically informed by knowledge of best practice. It may also be a simple trial and error approach searching for something that works. Cousins and Walker (1995) explained that teachers who are driven by a motivation to better meet the needs of their students are more open to experimenting with and implementing new methods and approaches. Participants usually experienced a spike in their self-efficacy when changes yielded immediate results. However, this spike in self-efficacy was not necessarily sustained, depending on the consistency of the teacher behavior change or the results. For example, a novice teacher tried out a change, obtained great results a few times, and then for whatever reason the positive outcomes lost momentum. At this point, the teacher's self-efficacy dipped back down, creating the yo-yo cycle of efficacy described by the new teachers in this study.

Intentional Practice seemed to be the stabilizer for self-efficacy growth. This was described primarily by longevity teachers with high self-ratings on their self-efficacy, although one new teacher did claim this terminology and provided examples of doing this. Teachers described intentional practice as intentional focus on a specific area to improve, a specific (or multiple specific) solutions, and consistent practice in using and refining the solutions. Therefore, narrowing the gap through initial implementation was

only the beginning. Participants talked about continually refining the changes by making frequent adjustments based on how students were responding in the instructional moment.

Intentional practice yielding consistent positive student outcomes creates a sense of *Equilibrium* in which teachers can see the gap closing. Equilibrium seemed to have more to do with awareness of consistent progress than actually reaching the goal. The consistency in perspective shift and teacher behavior change resulting in consistent positive student outcomes over time produces *Self-Efficacy Growth*.

Recurrent, visible positive outcomes are essential for *Self-Efficacy Growth*. Consistency in perspective and behavior change alone was not powerful enough to improve teacher efficacy without consistent evidence of change in outcomes. Additionally, even when veteran teachers live and breathe in intentional practice and high self-efficacy, they continued to cycle through *Dissonance, Perspective, and Teacher Behavior Change* with every new challenge. Veteran teachers shared examples of minor challenges that created tension and major challenges that led to a crisis point of questioning their ability to teach.

This self-efficacy growth cycle resembles the doubt cycle from my pilot study as well as Wheatley's cyclical process including disequilibrium, self-reflection, and change. The results from this study expanded these prior models to include *The Gold Standard, Intentional Practice, Equilibrium*, and the direct link to self-efficacy growth. This dissertation study also revealed that doubt is not a separate process that some teachers experience from time to time, but rather an allied component of the continual process that

creates self-efficacy growth. This aligns to Wheatley's (2002) assertion that doubts are an integral part of the teaching profession. It is the very awareness of a gap and a sense of dissonance that motivates teachers to seek a different perspective, change something about their practice, and institute changes to attain consistent results.

Some participants spoke about moving through part of the cycle, though not completing the entire cycle. For instance, in some stories, it appeared as if the teacher was stuck in dissonance. Wheatley's (2002) research explains that teachers more readily recover from doubts about specific skills than general doubts about themselves as teachers. At times, teachers were able to shift their perspective through their own cognitive processes and move past dissonance. In other cases, teachers were stuck in dissonance until an administrator, colleague, or family member talked them through a different way to think about the challenge. Social persuasion from an administrator appeared particularly powerful in helping teachers make a shift in their perspective, and thereby leading to a shift in their behavior in the classroom. This aligns to current research by Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2013) and Bandura (1997) finding social persuasion to be of particular importance when teaching challenges are present.

Additionally, not all teachers spoke in depth about utilizing intentional practice. Novice teachers, in particular, talked about wanting to learn and understand better ways of handling challenges, but didn't know exactly what to be intentional about. Whereas, more experienced teachers, and predominantly those with higher self-efficacy, learned the specific best practices address specific teaching challenges through perspective shifts and

trial and error practice. A detailed chart of these solutions is provided in the chart below.

Teachers consistently voiced the following proven solutions:

Table 12. Challenges and Teacher Proven Solutions from Experienced Teachers.

Problem (Challenge)	Solution “Get a new perspective on the challenge”
Classroom Management	Connection Connection with students minimizes classroom management challenges.
Students don’t understand.	Knowledge & Growth Responsiveness/ adjusting instruction. Focus on student understanding. Knowing students & understanding their learning needs facilitates responsiveness.
Perfectionism, overwhelmed with workload	Balance Balance allows for excellence and margin with workload.
I don’t know what I’m doing.	Knowledge & Growth Preparation and intentional (specific, targeted) practice maximize “knowing what I’m doing.”
I don’t know what to do. I don’t know what the problem is. My toolkit isn’t working; I’m out of tools. I’m in a growth rut and need inspiration.	Support, Knowledge & Growth Asking for feedback, proactively observing other teachers, and self-critiquing are strategies that maximize teacher growth and enlarge one’s teacher toolkit.

Research Question Three:

How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?

Results from this study revealed that participants utilized a variety of cognitive processes to develop their self-efficacy. This finding aligns to Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) submission that multiple cognitive processes are involved in creating teacher beliefs. Cognitive processes in the present study included cognitive flexibility (embracing alternative thoughts and behaviors), growth mindset (challenges as growth opportunities), mental models (recalling prior success or prior resilience), optimism (intentional focus on positive), self-reflection (evaluation of own behavior), and self-regulation (monitoring one's emotions and behavior). These examples are by no means exhaustive of all internal processes teachers may use. Rather, it represents those that became overtly apparent in this study through dialog with participants. All of the processes involved a shift in perspective in the way that teachers viewed themselves, students, or the situation. In all participant stories, this internal perspective shift occurred before teachers took action to change something and before teachers saw positive changes in students or the situation. Of special interest is that perspective shifts were significant, meaning that teachers put on a completely different lens. In some cases, there was something missing in their perspective of the problem that they had not considered as relevant information, such as ESL learning needs. In some stories, teachers had lost sight of their commitment, resolve, beliefs, or passion. They had to remind themselves of these tenets in the midst of challenging pushback.

A significant finding from the study was that mental models have enormous implications for strengthening resiliency. One participant, Sunny, described having a mental model of the entire self-efficacy growth cycle. From this mental model, she always knew that dissonance or low points would eventually cycle back up. Her prior experiences in moving through the cycle allowed her to visualize self-efficacy growth, even when the present situation looked bleak. The mental model allowed her to locate herself in dissonance, as a temporary stage, and “know” she would eventually cycle back to equilibrium and high self-efficacy.

I think, just realizing like, any job anywhere you’re going to have [those] days... Teaching is like a living growing thing. It’s kind of like an alive growing thing that sometimes gets sick... It’s not stagnant is what I’m trying to say. It’s never stagnant. It’s always going up or going down. Or...and to be, the profession is never a stagnant thing that’s not changing constantly. And so I think being aware that like part of change is negative sometimes and sometimes change is positive and you always pull out of ... and so knowing like you always come up. And experience teaches you that, like your first year you don’t necessarily know that.

As an informal coach and mentor to younger teachers, Sunny expressed concern that new teachers would not be able to recognize dissonance as a temporary stage leading to growth. Without a mental model of the growth cycle, new teachers expressed their dependence on affirmation from others that they were growing and that things would get better. In fact, new teachers were not alone in voicing their need for others to encourage them to keep going when the present situation was extremely challenging. Almost all of the participants shared at least one example of social persuasion from an administrator, colleague, or family member that made all the difference for them in staying in the challenging situation and renewing their hope for future positive outcomes. Participants

asked one another, close friends or family questions such as, “Remind me why I did this” and “Should I keep going?” Seeking affirmation from principals sounded, “I can’t do this anymore” or “I’m done!” From these examples and others, it appeared that teachers approached peers and family when in a questioning stage. They approached administrators when they had reached crisis state of discouragement.

Therefore, a key finding regarding cognitive processes is the value of social persuasion from administrators or colleagues. In some examples, participants were not able to facilitate their own perspective shift. It was unclear from the results of this study whether dependency on affirmation from others signified a lack of mental models, difficulty in recalling a mental model, or even perhaps a strategy to strengthen a mental model. All of the above are potential explanations, ascribed by the researcher. Regardless of the rationale, participants clearly identified social persuasion from others as a powerful mode to move out of dissonance and gain a fresh perspective.

Regarding self-efficacy malleability, the evidence of perspective changes among experienced teachers strongly contradicts literature claiming that self-efficacy beliefs are resistant to change once set (Bandura, 1997; Henry et al., 2011). Sunny’s story of exponential self-efficacy growth after a decade of teaching attests to the malleability potential of self-efficacy, particularly when certain conditions are present. In Sunny’s case, self-efficacy growth was related to a different teaching task, more work-life balance, coaching/mentorship opportunities, vicarious experiences, and renewed passion. This supports literature that leadership positions and new contexts or teaching tasks can

significantly influence experienced teachers' self-efficacy (Lev & Koslowsky, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007).

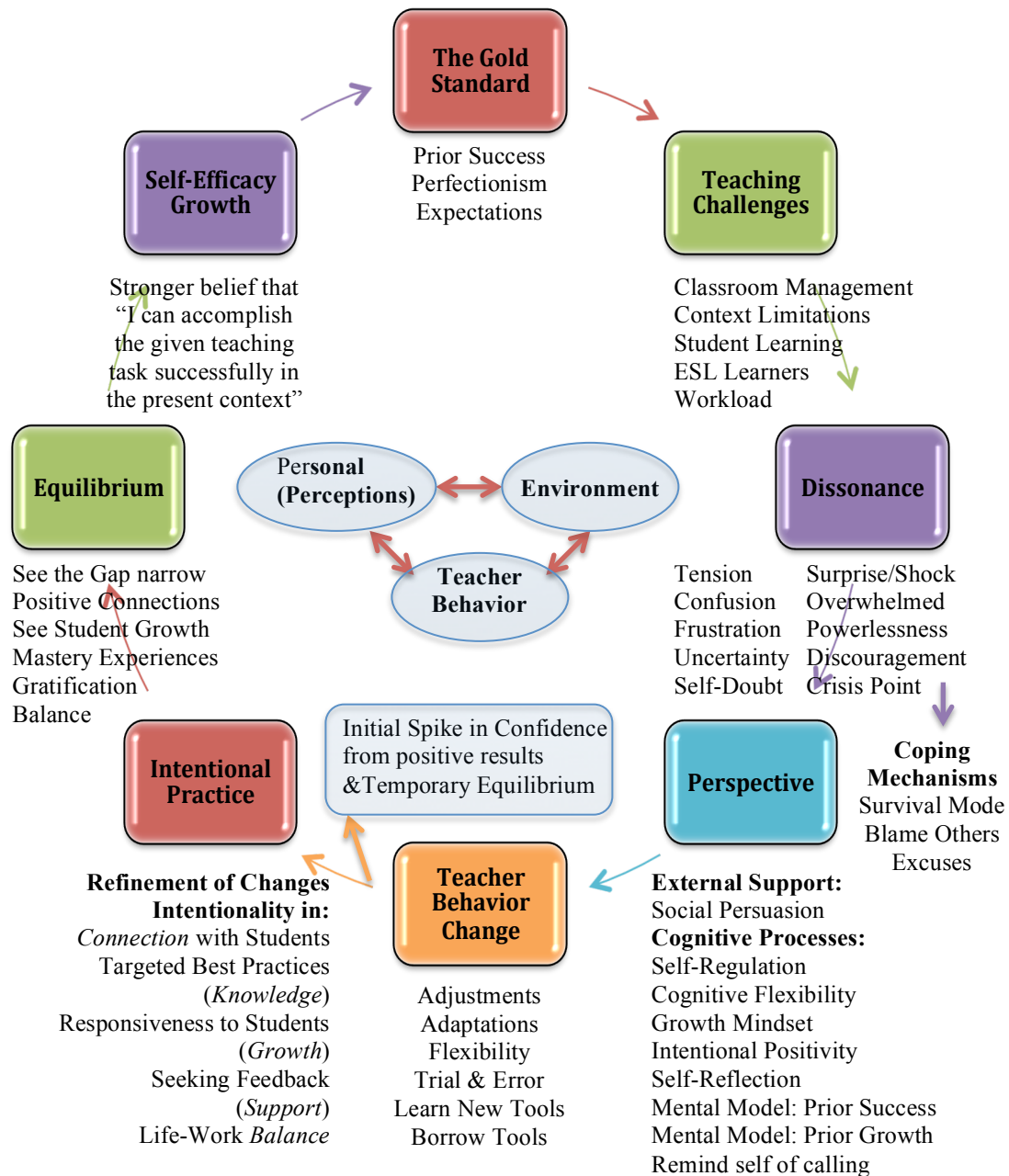
Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) explanation of cognitive processes includes an analysis of the task and an assessment of one's competence for the specific task. Participants' descriptions of their cognitive processes aligned to this definition. For example, when teachers had a revelation of ESL learning as the cause of teaching challenges, they adjusted their analysis of the teaching task. This empowered them to target the specific area of growth in competence to match the teaching task. On the negative side, when teachers didn't understand the root problem of classroom management or instruction problems, they believed they did not have the competence to overcome the challenge. These examples illustrate the importance of perceptions. The manner in which teachers approach and handle situations depend in great part on their perspective. Fortunately, the results of this study illustrated that teachers have great potential to experience changes in perspective through 1) their own internal processes and 2) verbal persuasion from others.

Conceptual Model of Self-Efficacy Development

The three research questions emerged as deeply connected and integrated with one another. The self-efficacy growth cycle emerged as a perfect compliment to the factors that shape self-efficacy beliefs. The relationship, resulting from this study, indicated that the influencing factors exist primarily within the Intentional Practice stage of the cycle. The cognitive processes that change and strengthen self-efficacy beliefs also

appear to reside within the growth cycle, primarily connected to Perspective. These relationships are depicted in the following conceptual diagram.

Figure 17. Conceptual Model of Self-efficacy Development.



Limitations

The most noticeable limitation was the potential for bias, inherent in the nature of a qualitative study. Also, my familiarity with the participants and the context, as well as my own prior experiences with self-efficacy created the possibility of researcher bias. To address this, I made every effort to bracket my own interpretation of the data. I also used member checking with all of my participants to ensure that I represented their ideas in the way in which they intended. Participants were given pseudonyms and data was coded blindly. However, since I had a small number of participants, I was keenly aware of the identity of each participant I was writing about because of their pseudonym and descriptors. I believe this actually made the descriptions and interpretation more accurate. For example, I would often pause in the midst of my writing, picture the teacher in my mind, and question whether my writing seemed to fit with what I knew about them. Due to the fact that I interacted with participants on many different levels both professionally and personally throughout the course of the study, this was easy for me to do. However, it also presented more potential for bias.

Another notable limitation was gender. Participants consisted of 11 female and 1 male teacher. The overrepresentation of female teachers in the study was due in part to the natural demographics of the school. The school site has significantly more female than male teachers. Another part was due to participants' familiarity and comfort level with me as a researcher. I approached individuals who I knew would be at ease sharing their thoughts, vulnerable experiences, and honest assessment of influencing factors with

me. However, this purposeful selection may have unintentionally pronounced self-efficacy perspectives more aligned to a female gender perspective.

Implications for Educational Leadership

The results from this study may inform administrators, mentors, instructional coaches and university programs about intentional, proactive ways to guide teacher self-efficacy growth. The significance of implications for educational leadership is a differentiation model for teachers who are at different places in their self-efficacy journey. These include university students, novice teachers, transition teachers, experienced teachers, and teachers experiencing burnout. The following presents practical approaches for administrators to nurture self-efficacy growth in teachers. The following practical suggestions emerged from participants' descriptions of specific approaches that have strengthened their self-efficacy growth.

Self-efficacy begins in university training programs (Cheung, 2008). An essential element for perspective shift is self-reflection. One participant, Dee, clearly articulated the specific university activities that taught her the art of self-reflection. She described frequent lesson simulations by professors followed by critiquing discussions. She also talked about self-reflection as an integrated component of every lesson assignment. Additionally, Dee shared that her professors often encouraged students to save ideas for their "teaching toolbox." Student teachers and first year teachers have the opportunity to take ownership of self-reflection when principals, cooperating teachers, or mentors use a dialoging, inquiry approach with lesson feedback.

Novice teachers, despite challenging teaching tasks, can thrive with certain environmental conditions. One condition is a positive school culture. Another is at least one informal mentorship relationship with an experienced teacher who genuinely wants to help and makes time for simply dialoging through issues with the novice teacher. These implications are supported by research indicating that mentor, colleague, and community support highly influence novice teachers' self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Yet another condition is frequent feedback from either a principal, mentor, or colleague that is focused on teaching elements close to the novice teacher's zone of proximal development. These are usually related to classroom management tips, student engagement tips, how to pace lessons, or how to prioritize curriculum content. Novice teachers need frequent verbal affirmation that they are on the right track and making progress. Recognition and celebration of any trivial success is monumental in building mental models of success in the novice teacher's memory.

Transition teachers are an easy category to neglect because they may be experienced, successful veteran teachers. These teachers are particularly vulnerable to disillusionment in a new teaching context when they have prior success and come in with high self-efficacy (Wheatley, 2002; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Results from this study indicate that transition teachers' greatest needs are 1) training in relationship connection with students and 2) an understanding of the unique learning needs of the context student body. Participants who had experienced transitions to diverse school contexts shared that peer observations were particularly helpful, both observing colleagues and receiving observation feedback from peers who understood the student

body characteristics. Additionally, administrative social persuasion was paramount for changing one's perspective about new teaching challenges and considering different teaching approaches for addressing those challenges. Success keys for transition teachers include embracing the new challenges as simple learning curves and understanding that most of their colleagues have worked through the same context specific challenges.

Experienced or veteran teachers can also be easily neglected, especially if they are good at their craft. These teachers need continued growth opportunities in order to avoid stagnation. Relevant literature and participant stories support the following growth opportunities as particularly beneficial for experienced teachers, namely: leadership, coaching, mentorship (informal) and vicarious experiences (observing others) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007; Bandura, 1997)

Teachers experiencing burnout can benefit from perspective shifts and intentional practice in work-life balance. These teachers are frequently self-professed perfectionists who try to do everything connected to their teaching responsibilities really, really well. One participant shared that her high expectations often led to pushing herself and her students really hard. She disclosed that intentionally creating fun, relationship-building downtime with her class helps her find balance and renews her enjoyment of teaching. Other participants shared effective strategies, including: intentional work-life boundaries, prioritization, productivity during work time, and realistic goals. In extreme burnout cases, a complete change of teaching assignment or a move to a part-time position can be extremely beneficial, not only for preventing an excellent teacher from leaving the

teaching profession altogether, but also to facilitate new growth opportunities and renewed passion.

In general terms regarding all teachers, educational leaders play a significant role in nurturing self-efficacy growth. Relational trust between teachers and administrators is the foundation of administrative influence on teacher self-efficacy (Versland et al., 2014; DiPaola, 2012; Bryke & Schneider, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). This relational trust is played out through specific leadership behaviors that send a clear message of the administrator's trust in the teacher's capabilities. For example, classroom observation and follow-up dialog that communicates a genuine "I am here to help you", "I trust that you know what you are doing", and "It's ok to make mistakes" fosters trust. When educational leaders buffer and back teachers with negative parental confrontations or student discipline, this communicates to teachers that their principal "has their back." Even when the teacher has made a mistake or handled something the wrong way, administrators can foster trust by talking through the issue with the teacher and providing suggestions for how to handle similar situations in the future.

Another way that educational leaders nurture self-efficacy is by fostering self-reflection. In the examples provided by participants, both principals and informal mentors led teachers to a place of self-reflection independence. Individuals accomplished this through two-way dialog about lessons, asking questions of the mentee, and having the mentee provide their own lesson feedback. The practice of self-reflection can be a professional development focus for all teachers. Brinson & Steiner (2007) and Ross & Gray (2006) found peer observation and feedback to build self-efficacy. To foster self-

reflection, peer observation would need to include a feedback or debriefing discussion component. Self-reflection can also be fostered through individual teacher self-video taping, self-reflection, and debriefing discussions with colleagues.

General professional development can build individual teacher efficacy as well as collective efficacy. The results from this study direct teachers and educational leaders to focus on building intentional practice in the areas of 1) connection, 2) responsiveness, 3) balance, and 4) support. Connection refers to building relationships and rapport with students as individuals and as groups. School-wide discipline programs focusing on specific ways to create community would be beneficial, provided that the foundation is genuine care for students. Responsiveness refers to differentiation based on an in-depth understanding of students' learning needs. Results from this study indicated that continued professional development focused on ESL learning would be beneficial for teachers at the context international school, and particularly transition teachers. Intentional practice with work-life balance is essential to prevent teacher burnout. Teachers, particularly novice teachers, need to know the difference between the "must do's" and the "if you have time." It's taken for granted that novice or transition teachers know what to emphasize, what to move through quickly, and what to leave out. Also beneficial could be practical tips for setting realistic goals, work productivity/efficiency, setting work-life boundaries, and task "short-cuts". Professional development in this regard requires a more holistic approach, requiring a view of teachers as human beings instead of machines. Intentional practice in support meant that participants actively sought out feedback from their principals or colleagues. Professional development

addressing this could include some form of peer collaboration support structures (Ross & Gray, 2006).

Recommendations for Future Research

This section addresses possible recommendations related to this study that should be considered for future studies. The results of this study establish a basis for understanding the phenomenon of self-efficacy development in teachers. In particular, it addressed influencing factors, the process of self-efficacy growth, and cognitive processes that stimulate self-efficacy growth. It conveyed the personal stories of twelve participants through their journeys of self-efficacy development. The results suggested that additional studies could provide beneficial insight regarding specific components of teacher self-efficacy as well as implications for educational leadership.

Follow-up qualitative studies in different teaching contexts would provide an understanding of which self-efficacy factors are context specific and which factors could represent teachers across different contexts. Qualitative studies investigating the perceptions of administrators regarding their role in teacher self-efficacy growth may contribute to a multi-facet understanding of supportive leadership behaviors. In addition, the pattern of this qualitative study has potential for investigating the self-efficacy development of principals and superintendents.

Chapter Summary

Self-efficacy refers to the belief of teachers that they can successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a specific context (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the development process of teacher self-efficacy. Chapter five provides a synthesis for this phenomenological study by summarizing the key findings from self-efficacy stories of twelve expatriate teachers in an international school in the Dominican Republic.

The present study gave participants the opportunity to voice their perceptions regarding factors that shape their self-efficacy. The tight connections to existing literature confirmed participants' identification with Bandura's (1997) efficacy sources, Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998; 2007) emphasis on cognitive processing, Wheatley's (2002) research on beneficial doubt, and Bryk and Schneider's (2003) work on relational trust. Key findings from this study enriched the existing body of literature by providing a conceptual model of self-efficacy development and growth. Results also added to existing research by illuminating specific cognitive process teachers utilize and how to nurture those processes. Additionally, participants' stories added richness of understanding as to how educational leaders support self-efficacy growth in teachers, and in particular the role and formation of relational trust. Implications for practice included a differentiated model of leadership support to novice, transition, experienced, and burnout teachers. Implications also included recommendations for general staff development, emphasizing an intentional and holistic approach to teacher competency growth in the areas of connection, responsiveness/differentiation, balance, and support.

Teacher self-efficacy is decisively important for student outcomes, teacher wellbeing and ultimately teacher retention. The findings of this study suggest that teacher self-efficacy is created and shaped primarily through the influence of external and internal factors. This study has discussed emerging findings of cognitive processes that are critical for empowering teachers to embrace change and growth as they encounter challenging teaching factors. Lastly, results from this study provided evidence indicating that educational leaders are bestowed with significant potential for nurturing, neglecting, or harming teacher self-efficacy growth.

The key findings are relevant to the context international school in this study. Correlations to prior literature suggest that many of the key findings are generalizable to educational leaders and teachers across school contexts. In addition, readers are welcome to make appropriate transfer of applications and implications based on readers' personal connections to participants' stories.

The results of this study enriched my perspective of teacher self-efficacy at a profound level professionally and personally. I am deeply grateful to the participants in this study who shared their personal stories of struggles and triumphs. The overarching intentions of this study were met and superseded beyond my expectations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TEACHERS' SENSE OF EFFICACY SCALE (SHORT FORM)
AND OPEN ENDED ESSAY QUESTION

Participant name: _____

(Your name will be kept confidential. When I receive this survey from you, I will assign you a code number in place of your name and then remove your name. I will use the code number and a codebook to match you to follow-up interviews. The final written report will only use pseudonyms.)

Demographic Question:

How many years have you been a teacher (total)? _____

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale¹ (short form)

Teacher Beliefs		How much can you do?								
Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.		Nothing	Very Little	Some Influence	Quite A Bit	A Great Deal				
1.	How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2.	How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3.	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)
4.	How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
5.	To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
6.	How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
7.	How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
8.	How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
9.	How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
10.	To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11.	How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
12.	How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

Open ended essay question:

Briefly describe a time when you encountered a challenge in teaching and how you addressed the challenge. It would be helpful if you could include your thought process through the experience.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION FOR USE OF TEACHERS'

SENSE OF SELF-EFFICACY SCALE



ANITA WOOLFOLK HOY, PH.D.

PROFESSOR
PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION

Dear ROBIN ZERBE,

You have my permission to use the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* in your research. A copy the scoring instructions can be found at:

<http://u.osu.edu/hoy.17/research/instruments/>

Best wishes in your work,

Anita Woolfolk Hoy, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUPS: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Focus Groups: Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Topic: Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Time of session:

Date:

Place:

Focus group:

Purpose:

The purpose of this focus group is *to understand teachers' thinking processes about their self-efficacy beliefs*.

Confidentiality:

To protect confidentiality, I ask that everyone respect that everything shared in the session stays here and is not to be shared in any context after the session. I also ask that everyone respect the ideas shared by other participants in the group, suspending any judgment and criticism. I will need to audio record this session so that I can best represent your ideas. Do I have your permission to do this? Any names mentioned will be deleted from the transcript.

Discussion protocol:

I will read one of the 12 survey items and then ask you to explain your thinking as you answered the item. It's not necessary to share how you scored it. I'm more interested in your thought process. You may share a specific example from your teaching experience, explain why you rated the item the way you did, or ask the group a question. You may also pass on any question. This session will not go over an hour.

Round table protocol:

To provide an equal voice to all participants and to avoid a few individuals dominating the conversation, we will use a round table protocol. In this protocol, everyone is given an opportunity to respond, add a question or pass, beginning at one end of the circle and moving in order to the other end. We will follow this protocol for all 12 items. If a question arises from an item, I will present the question back to the group, following the round table protocol.

Questions: (taken directly from the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale)

1. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?
2. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?
3. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?
4. How much can you do to help your students value learning?
5. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?
6. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?
7. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?
8. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?
9. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?
10. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?
11. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?
12. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?

Follow-up:

I will ask a few of you to participate in an individual interview that will allow you to be more specific. It will have different questions that I will give you ahead of time and allow you to choose which questions you want to talk about. This is voluntary. For the sake of my time, I can only do individual interviews with about half of the teachers from the focus groups.

Consideration of participants:

I recognize that your time and willingness to share personal teaching experiences is extremely valuable. I am deeply grateful for your willingness to participate.

APPENDIX D

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Individual Interviews: Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Topic: Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Time of session:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

Purpose:

The purpose of this interview is to learn what factors influence teacher self-efficacy (how confident a teacher feels about their teaching capabilities and their influence on student achievement). I also want to learn how this self-efficacy develops in teachers and how it can be strengthened. My purpose is to simply learn from you and your experiences, without any judgment or criticism.

Confidentiality:

You are free to decline to answer any specific questions. Everything you share is confidential. No information will be reported to anyone, including administrators, using your name. Your participation in this study will not affect your teaching position at SCS in any way. Any information you share that could easily identify you will be deleted from the study. All data will be kept locked up or under password entry and I will be the only person with access. I will change your name to a pseudonym in my final written summary.

Question protocol:

You may choose the questions from the list that you feel most comfortable sharing with me. It is not necessary to answer all of the questions. I may ask follow-up questions to clarify that I understand what you are saying.

Questions (Session 1):DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

- How many years have you been a teacher (total)?
- How many years have you been a teacher at SCS?
- What is your ethnicity/race?
- What is your age?
- What grade levels and subjects do you currently teach?
- What university degrees do you have, and in what subjects?
- Briefly describe your teaching biography. (If you have taught in different schools, describe length of teaching for each, grade levels, and subjects taught.)

GENERAL QUESTIONS

- What do you think makes a good teacher?
- Do you believe that you can make a difference in a child's life?
- What part of the children's lives do you feel that you have the most impact on?
- Can you tell me about a time you have felt valued as a teacher?
- Why do you continue to teach?

CONFIDENCE

- Can you tell me about a time you felt particularly confident in the classroom?
- Is there anything that has made you feel less confident in your abilities?
- What makes your confidence in teaching improve?
- Do other people have an impact on your confidence as a teacher?

PRESSURE & STRESSORS

- Where do you feel pressures come from as a teacher? How do you deal with these pressures?
- What are some things you see as teaching challenges? How do you handle these challenges?
- What are some aspects of teaching that create stress for you? How do you handle this stress?

Questions (Session 2):INSPIRATION

- Has there ever been anyone that has really inspired you as a teacher?
- When you have observed another teacher, have you ever seen good practice that you have then tried for yourself?
- Can you describe an experience that has really motivated you as a teacher to improve your practice?

RELATIONSHIPS

- Are there times when administrators have encouraged your beliefs in your ability to be successful teaching?
- Have administrators ever impeded or discouraged your beliefs in your ability to be successful teaching?
- In what ways do other teachers around you affect your teaching?
- How does student and/or parent feedback affect you?

CHANGES & TRANSITIONS

- Have you noticed any changes with the school, students, or families that make things difficult for you when teaching in the classroom? How does this affect you?
- Have you ever changed grade levels or positions? How did this affect you?
- (For transfers) Can you remember the transition between your previous school and this school? How did this affect you?

CRISIS POINTS

- Have you ever doubted your abilities as a teacher? How did you deal with this?
- Have you every felt less confident as a teacher? How did you deal with this?
- Have you ever felt a 'crisis point' in your teaching career? How did you resolve this?
- Have you ever applied for other teaching jobs or jobs not in education? What was your main motivation in wanting to leave that particular teaching job (past or present)?
- Are there any factors that make you want to leave teaching altogether?
- What factors convince you to stay in teaching?

APPENDIX E

TABLE OF SPECIFICATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Table of Specifications

Table of Specifications: Teacher Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1. What factors shape the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in a particular international school in the Dominican Republic?	<u>GENERAL QUESTIONS (Internal Factors)</u> • What do you think makes a good teacher? (Factors) • Do you believe that you can make a difference in a child's life? (Factors) • What part of the children's lives do you feel that you have the most impact on? (Factors) • Can you tell me about a time you have felt valued as a teacher? (Factors) • Why do you continue to teach? (Factors) <u>INSPIRATION (External Factors)</u> • Do other people have an impact on your confidence as a teacher? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • Has there ever been anyone that has really inspired you as a teacher? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • When you have observed another teacher, have you ever seen good practice that you have then tried for yourself? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • Can you describe an experience that has really motivated you as a teacher to improve your practice? (Cognitive Processes, Self-efficacy development) <u>RELATIONSHIPS (External Factors)</u> • Are there times when administrators have encouraged your beliefs in your ability to be successful teaching? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • Have administrators ever impeded or discouraged your beliefs in your ability to be successful teaching? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • In what ways do other teachers around you affect your teaching? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • How does student and/or parent feedback affect you? (Self-efficacy development) <u>CONFIDENCE (Internal or External Factors)</u> • Can you tell me about a time you felt particularly confident in the classroom? (Factors, Self-efficacy Development) • Is there anything that has made you feel less confident in your abilities? (Factors, Self-efficacy Development) • What makes your confidence in teaching improve? (Factors, Self-efficacy Development, Cognitive Processes) <u>PRESSURE & STRESSORS (Internal or External Factors)</u> • Where do you feel pressures come from as a teacher? (Factors) • What are some things you see as teaching challenges? (Factors) • What are some aspects of teaching that create stress for you?

	(Factors) <u>CHANGES & TRANSITIONS (External Factors)</u> • Have you noticed any changes with the school, students, or families that make things difficult for you when teaching in the classroom? (Factors) • Have you ever changed grade levels or positions? (Factors) • (For transfers) Can you remember the transition between your previous school and this school? (Factors) <u>CRISIS POINTS</u> • Have you ever applied for other teaching jobs or jobs not in education? What was your main motivation in wanting to leave the current job (past or present)? (Factors) • Are there any factors that make you want to leave teaching altogether? (Factors) • What factors convince you to stay in teaching? (Factors)
2. How does self-efficacy develop in teachers in a particular international school in the Dominican Republic?	<u>INSPIRATION (External Factors)</u> • Do other people have an impact on your confidence as a teacher? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • Has there ever been anyone that has really inspired you as a teacher? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • When you have observed another teacher, have you ever seen good practice that you have then tried for yourself? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • Can you describe an experience that has really motivated you as a teacher to improve your practice? (Cognitive Processes, Self-efficacy development) <u>RELATIONSHIPS (External Factors)</u> • Are there times when administrators have encouraged your beliefs in your ability to be successful teaching? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • Have administrators ever impeded or discouraged your beliefs in your ability to be successful teaching? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • In what ways do other teachers around you affect your teaching? (Factors, Self-efficacy development) • How does student and/or parent feedback affect you? (Self-efficacy development) <u>CONFIDENCE (Internal or External Factors)</u> • Can you tell me about a time you felt particularly confident in the classroom? (Factors, Self-efficacy Development) • Is there anything that has made you feel less confident in your abilities? (Factors, Self-efficacy Development) • What makes your confidence in teaching improve? (Factors, Self-efficacy Development, Cognitive Processes)

	<u>PRESSURE & STRESSORS (Internal or External Factors)</u> • How do you deal with these pressures? (Self-efficacy Development, Cognitive Processes) • How do you handle these challenges? (Self-efficacy Development, Cognitive Processes) • How do you handle this stress? (Self-efficacy Development, Cognitive Processes) <u>CHANGES & TRANSITIONS (External Factors)</u> • How does this (school changes) affect you? (Self-efficacy development, Cognitive Processes) • How did this (change grade level) affect you? (Self-efficacy development, Cognitive Processes) • How did this (transfer schools) affect you? (Self-efficacy development, Cognitive Processes) <u>CRISIS POINTS</u> • Have you ever doubted your abilities as a teacher? (Self-efficacy development) • Have you every felt less confident as a teacher? (Self-efficacy development) • Have you ever felt a 'crisis point' in your teaching career? (Self-efficacy development)
3. How do international teachers in the Dominican Republic describe the internal cognitive processes to develop, change, and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs?	<u>CONFIDENCE (Internal or External Factors)</u> • What makes your confidence in teaching improve? (Factors, Self-efficacy Development, Cognitive Processes) <u>PRESSURE & STRESSORS (Internal or External Factors)</u> • How do you deal with these pressures? (Self-efficacy Development, Cognitive Processes) • How do you handle these challenges? (Self-efficacy Development, Cognitive Processes) • How do you handle this stress? (Self-efficacy Development, Cognitive Processes) <u>CHANGES & TRANSITIONS (External Factors)</u> • How does this (school changes) affect you? (Self-efficacy development, Cognitive Processes) • How did this (change grade levels) affect you? (Self-efficacy development, Cognitive Processes) • How did this (transfer schools) affect you? (Self-efficacy development, Cognitive Processes) <u>CRISIS POINTS</u> • How did you deal with this (self-doubt)? (Cognitive Processes) • How did you deal with this (low confidence)? (Cognitive Processes) • How did you resolve this (crisis point)? (Cognitive Processes)

APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

A qualitative study researching teacher self-efficacy beliefs

Robin Zerbe, Researcher
Montana State University
robin.zerbe@gmail.com

You are invited to participate in a research study on teacher self-efficacy. You were selected because you are currently teaching at SCS and (A) have taught less than 5 years, (B) have 5 or more years of experience, or (C) have 10 or more years of experience.

Purpose of the study:

The purpose is to learn what factors influence self-efficacy (how confident a teacher feels about their teaching capabilities and their influence on student achievement). I also want to learn how this self-efficacy develops in teachers and how it can be strengthened. My purpose is to simply learn from you and your experiences, without any judgment or criticism.

Procedures:

Participation in this study involves the following:

- Sign & return a copy of this consent form
- Complete a 12 question survey & essay question & return a copy to myself (takes about 20 minutes)
- Some participants will be selected to further participate in a focus group with 3 other teachers that will discuss the questions from the survey (will last about an hour). *I will need to audio record the session to best represent what you say.*
- Some participants will be selected to further participate in individual interviews with myself (I will give you a copy of the interview questions ahead of time and you can choose the questions you most want to share about) (2 sessions will last 1 hour each). *I will need to audio record this to best represent what you say.*

Risks of participating:

This research has minimal risks to the participant. Participation is voluntary. You are free to stop participating in the research at any time, or to decline to answer any specific questions. Everything you share is confidential. Your participation in this study will not affect your teaching position at SCS in any way. No information will be reported to anyone using your name. Any information you share that could easily identify you will be deleted from the study. Your name will be replaced with a code number. Only pseudonyms will be used in my final written summary. All data will be kept locked up or

under password entry and I will be the only person with access. The focus groups will have confidentiality protocols so that everything shared in the group is not shared after the session. The total approximate time commitment is between 20 minutes (initial participants) and 3 hours (final participants).

Benefits of participating:

There are no monetary benefits for participating. One benefit to you is that I will share a summary of relevant findings from all participants, which may help you gain awareness about:

- The influence of beliefs, perspectives, and perceptions
- Handling teaching stressors and challenges
- Strengthening your confidence as a teacher
- More effectively impacting students
- Overcoming doubts
- Persistence and resiliency

Another benefit to you is that I will share a summary of findings to SCS administration. This may provide the administration with a better understanding of specific factors that strengthen teacher confidence. This may provide focus for changes that can be made to improve experiences for all SCS teachers.

Additionally, this research study will be published and read by teachers and school leaders in other contexts. The findings from this study may provide helpful insights to others who can connect with similar experiences or similar international teaching contexts.

Consideration of participants:

I recognize that your time and willingness to share personal teaching experiences is extremely valuable. I approach this study with gratitude and respect for your choice to participate or not.

Questions:

If you have any questions regarding this research project you can talk to me in person or contact me at rzerbe@scs.edu.do. Any additional questions about the rights of human subjects can be answered by the Chair of the MSU Human Subjects Committee, Mark Quinn, (406) 994-4707, mquinn@montana.edu.

AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above and understand the discomforts, inconvenience and risk of this study. I, _____, agree to participate in this research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX G

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR PERMISSION FORM

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR PERMISSION FORM

A qualitative study researching teacher self-efficacy beliefs

Robin Zerbe, Researcher
Montana State University
robin.zerbe@gmail.com

Currently I am seeking to conduct a research study about teacher confidence. I am seeking permission to invite *internationally teaching* SCS teachers to participate. I will need about 20 teachers to take an initial survey. From the survey, I will select 12 teachers for focus group sessions. From those sessions, I will select 3 to 5 teachers for in-depth individual interviews.

Purpose of the study:

The purpose is to learn what factors influence teacher self-efficacy (how confident a teacher feels about their teaching capabilities and their influence on student achievement). I also want to learn how this self-efficacy develops in teachers and how it can be strengthened.

Value of the study:

Research indicates that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs influence teachers' emotional and physiological wellbeing, their own job satisfaction, stress management, effort and performance, commitment to teaching in general and to the particular school, and longevity in the profession. Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy believe they can positively impact student success. These teachers are focused on student learning and tend to plan activities that challenge and engage students. In the face of challenges, teachers with strong self-efficacy become more determined, give more effort, and focus more on quality instruction.

Research indicates that teacher efficacy beliefs are more influential for student achievement than student or community characteristics. Teachers' self-efficacy has been found to impact student motivation, increase student self-esteem and self-direction, engagement in class activities and effort with learning challenges. Teachers' self-efficacy has a significant impact on student achievement, specifically in reading and math.

However, there is minimal understanding about how this self-efficacy develops in teachers, particularly new teachers. Also, there is little knowledge about how self-efficacy can be strengthened as teachers encounter challenges, discouragement, and doubts. This study purposes to gain an understanding of these issues by interviewing

teachers about their thoughts and experiences. *The findings of this study may provide insight to reduce teacher turnover and improve teacher job satisfaction and effectiveness.*

Procedures:

Approximately 20 teachers total will be involved in the following:

- Signing a consent form
- Completing a 12 question survey and an open ended essay question (attached)

Based on review of the surveys, approximately 12 teachers total will be involved in the following:

- Participating in a focus group with 3 other teachers that will discuss the questions from the survey (will last about an hour). *I will need to audio record the session.*

Based on the focus groups, approximately 3 to 5 teachers will be involved in the following:

- Participating in individual interviews with myself (two sessions) (see attached questions) (will last about 1 hour each). *I will need to audio record interviews.*

Risks of participating:

This research has minimal risks to the participant. Participation is voluntary. Participants are free to stop participating in the research at any time, or to decline to answer any specific questions. Everything shared is confidential. Participation in this study will not affect participants' teaching position at SCS in any way. No information will be reported to anyone using names. Any information shared that could easily identify participants will be deleted from the study. Names will be replaced with a code number. Only pseudonyms will be used in my final written summary. All data will be kept locked up or under password entry and I will be the only person with access. The focus groups will have confidentiality protocols so that everything shared in the group is not shared after the session. The total approximate time commitment is between 20 minutes (initial participants) and 3 hours (final participants).

Benefits of participating:

There are no monetary benefits for participating. One benefit to participants is that I will share a summary of relevant findings from all participants, which may help teachers gain awareness about:

- The influence of beliefs, perspective, and perceptions
- Handling teaching stressors and challenges
- Strengthening one's confidence as a teacher
- More effectively impacting students
- Overcoming doubts
- Persistence and resiliency

Another benefit to teachers is that I will share a summary of findings to SCS administration. This may provide the administration with a better understanding of specific factors that strengthen teacher confidence. This may provide focus for changes that can be made to reduce turnover and improve teacher resiliency.

Additionally, this research study will be published and read by teachers and school leaders in other contexts. The findings from this study may provide helpful insights to others who can connect with similar experiences or similar international teaching contexts.

Consideration of participants:

I recognize that teachers' time and willingness to share personal teaching experiences is extremely valuable. I approach this study with gratitude and respect for their choice to participate or not.

Questions:

If you have any questions regarding this research project you can talk to me in person or contact me at rzerbe@scs.edu.do. Any additional questions about the rights of human subjects can be answered by the Chair of the MSU Human Subjects Committee, Mark Quinn, (406) 994-4707, mquinn@montana.edu.

AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above description of this study.

I, _____, give my permission for teachers at SCS to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this permission form for my own records.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX H

UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
For the Protection of Human Subjects
FWA 00000165

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 406-994-4707
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Administrator:
 Cheryl Johnson
 406-994-4706
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Robin Zerbe and Tena Versland
FROM: Mark Quinn *Mark Quinn*
DATE: September 22, 2017
SUBJECT: "Teacher Self-Efficacy Dissertation" [RZ092217-EX]

The above research, described in your submission of September 22, 2017, is exempt from the requirement of review by the Institutional Review Board in accordance with the Code of Federal regulations, Part 46, section 101. The specific paragraph which applies to your research is:

- ☐ (b) (1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
- ☒ (b) (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.
- ☐ (b) (3) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
- ☐ (b) (4) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available, or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.
- ☐ (b) (5) Research and demonstration projects, which are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.
- ☐ (b) (6) Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed, or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the FDA, or approved by the EPA, or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the USDA.

Although review by the Institutional Review Board is not required for the above research, the Committee will be glad to review it. If you wish a review and committee approval, please submit 3 copies of the usual application form and it will be processed by expedited review.