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PREVIEW

ENHANCING TEACHING SELF-EFFICACY IN PRESERVICE TEACHERS
THROUGH DIRECT EXPERIENCE, VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE,
AND PERSUASION

by

Kenneth M. Hagen

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Interdepartmental Area of
Psychological and Cultural Studies

Under the Supervision of Professor Terry B. Gutkin

Lincoln, Nebraska

June, 1998

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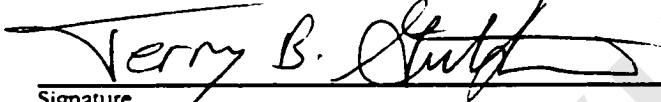
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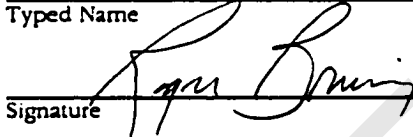


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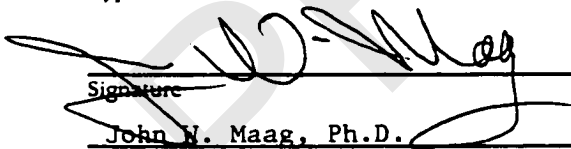


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ENHANCING TEACHING SELF-EFFICACY IN PRESERVICE TEACHERS
THROUGH DIRECT EXPERIENCE, VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE,
AND PERSUASION

Kenneth M. Hagen, Ph.D.
University of Nebraska, 1998

Adviser: Terry B. Gutkin

In this study, preservice teachers were taught an approach to managing classroom behavior problems and then completed two questionnaires regarding perceptions of personal self-efficacy as future teachers. Participants received direct information regarding the strategy, were modeled it, and were allowed to role play use of the strategy. As a result, participants received persuasion, and both direct and vicarious experience as to the effectiveness of the problem solving approach. Participants, when compared to those of a placebo-control group, demonstrated greater levels of self-efficacy in their ability to: (a) manage their classroom, and (b) have a positive effect on difficult-to-teach students despite their family background or influential peers. Participants also demonstrated a greater sense of efficacy in their ability to work successfully with hypothetical cases presented in brief vignettes. Limitations and implications

for future research are discussed. The results provide direction for school psychologists' provision of services through effective problem solving inservices.

PREVIEW

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Until relatively recently, it was thought unrealistic to consider educating all students, including those with severe disabilities, within a regular classroom (Karagiannis, Stainback, & Stainback, 1996). However, since the passage of P.L. 94-142 in 1975, which mandated that children with disabilities would, to the maximum extent feasible, be educated in the least restrictive environment, there has been increased commitment to educating children with disabilities in the regular classroom (Gutkin, 1996). However, despite the legal support for inclusion of students with disabilities within the regular classroom, it appears that teachers are hesitant and unwilling to serve difficult-to-teach students (Algozzine & Ysseldyke, 1986; Hagen, Gutkin, Wilson, & Oats, 1996; Sachs, 1988).

This hesitancy may not be surprising considering the many years that regular education teachers have observed children being sent to a separate classrooms and institutions in order to receive instruction. Once there, instruction was provided by "special" educators whose training and expertise may be viewed as distinct from that of the regular education teacher. Thus, when a new difficult-to-teach student appears in the classroom, many teachers react by referring the child to special

education. With the movement toward greater inclusion of these students in regular education classrooms, it seems clear that general classroom teachers will need to acquire new skills (Schloss, 1992) and additional support (Gutkin, 1996) in working with students who are difficult to teach. Included in this change in the teaching profession will be an increase in the extent to which teachers are expected to collaborate and consult with other professionals in order to develop their skills further (Karagiannis et al., 1996). Unfortunately, school psychologists (and likely, other professionals) frequently experience teachers who are reluctant to participate in consultation and/or to implement strategies developed through consultation or collaboration (Wilson, Gutkin, Hagen, & Oats, 1996). Thus, school psychologists need to develop ways of increasing the likelihood that regular education teachers will be willing, first, to engage in the consultative process, and secondly, commit to an effortful attempt to implement the plans developed during consultation, rather than referring the student for special education placement.

Teachers' failure to serve difficult-to-teach students may result from self-efficacy beliefs that they do not possess the necessary skills (a belief that may or may not be true) and are therefore incapable of effectively teaching difficult-to-teach students.

Successful performance of an act is seen to be a result of both the actual ability to perform the requisite behaviors and the self-efficacy belief that one is able to perform successfully (Bandura, 1977, 1993). Thus, people may, in fact, possess the requisite skill but fail to take action because of feelings that they would not be successful. Persons who are low in self-efficacy perceptions of their ability to deal effectively with a task are less likely within a given domain to attempt difficult tasks or to be committed to attaining a goal (Olivier & Shapiro, 1993; Sachs, 1988). Furthermore, they are more likely to expend less effort and to quit more quickly when confronted with task-related problems. On the other hand, persons who are high in self-efficacy within a given domain are more likely to view difficult tasks as challenges and become involved in trying to solve, rather than avoid, them. Bandura (1993) suggests that persons who have high self-efficacy beliefs for a domain

set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They maintain a task-diagnostic focus that guides effective performance. They heighten and sustain their effort in the face of failure. They attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills that are acquirable. They quickly recover their sense of

efficacy after failures or setbacks. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them (pp. 144-145).

Thus, people who are high in self-efficacy are more likely to confront challenges and to persist in attempting to solve the problem.

Evidence suggests that self-efficacy beliefs of teachers are related to their performance in the classroom (Bruning, Schweiger, Horn, & Rankin, 1992; Emmer & Hickman, 1991; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Podell & Soodak, 1993). Of particular interest is the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their readiness to work with difficult-to-teach children. The results suggest that teachers who are higher in self-efficacy are more confident in their ability to solve problems that arise in their classroom and to work persistently toward finding solutions from a variety of sources. For example, Meijer and Foster (1988) found that teachers who were higher in self-efficacy perceptions rated student problems as less severe and were less likely to refer the student to special education. In addition, Gibson and Dembo (1984) reported that teachers higher in self-efficacy were more likely to provide needed help as well as praise for students who were having difficulty. Teachers who were lower in self-efficacy beliefs regarding their teaching

abilities were more likely to be critical and to give up on the students. Finally, teachers who are higher in self-efficacy perceptions are more likely to prefer consultation services, once they acknowledge that a problem exists (Gutkin & Ajchenbaum, 1984; Gutkin & Hickman, 1988).

Thus, teachers who have a greater sense of self-efficacy regarding their teaching abilities appear to be more likely to engage in educational practices consistent with the inclusion movement in education. They are more willing to keep the difficult-to-teach child in the regular education classroom, to attempt a variety of strategies, including consultation, and to persist in trying to solve problems. Consequently, developing strategies that enhance teachers' sense of self-efficacy when combined with effective skills should increase the likelihood that teachers would be more willing to include difficult-to-teach children in the regular classroom and to provide more effective instruction while doing so.

Unfortunately, little research has investigated methods of increasing teacher self-efficacy, but has focused instead on correlational studies on the relationship between self-efficacy and some other performance measure (Lust, Celuch, & Showers, 1993). Bandura (1977, 1993) suggested that self-efficacy

perceptions result from sources of information such as:

- (a) performance accomplishments, (b) vicarious experience,
- (c) verbal persuasion, and (d) emotional arousal.

Performance accomplishments are thought to be particularly effective because, more than any other source, they provide clear evidence of one's level of ability (Bandura, 1988; Ozer & Bandura, 1992). Although a person may be encouraged to attempt an action as a result of observing someone's success or by persuasion, direct experience of failure likely will counter even the most persuasive and effective model. However, if a person experiences initial success, subsequent poor performance is less likely to lower self-efficacy.

Herein lies, however, what has been described by Hagen, Gutkin, Wilson, & Oates (in press) as a "chicken and the egg" dilemma. Teachers who are already high in self-efficacy are more likely to engage in activities that further enhance their sense of efficacy. Teachers who have been exposed to consultation for a period of years believe that their skills improved (Elliott & Sheridan, 1992). In addition, the rates of referral decreased significantly over the years that consultation was provided. As teachers are successful working with difficult-to-teach students in an inclusive setting, efficacy-enhancing evidence is provided. Given successful performance accomplishment and

collaborative/consultative support, teachers' efficacy will be greater as will their persistence in working with these students.

However, those teachers lower in self-efficacy are less likely to either work with difficult-to-teach children (Gibson & Dembo, 1984) or engage in collaborative efforts such as consultation (Gutkin & Hickman, 1988). Instead they are more likely to refer the student to special education and thereby miss out on potential opportunities for efficacy enhancement. Relying on successful performance accomplishments to increase efficacy in teachers who are avoiding those very experiences is counterproductive. Thus, the challenge becomes one of identifying methods that will enhance self-efficacy of teachers to a level that is sufficient for them to have enough confidence in their ability to work with difficult-to-teach students, find success, and as a result, further increase their sense of efficacy.

Hagen et al. (in press) were able to increase preservice teachers' self-efficacy on several factors of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Hagen, Gutkin, & Wilson, 1995) by providing participants vicarious experience and verbal persuasion in a brief workshop. Participants watched a 30-minute videotape in which effective classroom management techniques were described and teachers

testified as to the effectiveness of these methods. Participants, when compared to a control group, demonstrated greater teacher self-efficacy, both in terms of their perceived ability to manage classroom discipline problems as well as provide effective instruction. Thus, this study demonstrated that self-efficacy could be elevated as a result of a brief intervention such as a workshop or class. However, participants in this study were not given the performance accomplishment experiences that most clearly provide efficacy information.

The present study was designed to build on the Hagen et al. (in press) study by providing participants the opportunity to experience performance accomplishments in addition to vicarious experience and persuasion within a workshop format. Participants were given information and modeling regarding a problem solving approach that is effective in developing solutions to classroom management problems. In a later segment of the training, participants were provided direct, active experience in developing strategies to solve a problem presented in a vignette describing a difficult-to-teach student. Subsequently, participants' teacher self-efficacy scores, as well as confidence estimates of their ability to manage successfully other student problems, were compared to a placebo-control group. It was hypothesized that

participants exposed to the experimental workshop would demonstrate higher levels of self-efficacy regarding their ability to provide effective instruction and manage classroom discipline problems.

PREVIEW