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EXPLORING TEACHER EFFICACY OF IN-SERVICE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN TRINIDAD AND TABAGO

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Exploring Teacher Efficacy of In-Service Secondary School Teachers in Trinidad and Tobago

Synopsis:

Teacher efficacy is not widely researched in Trinidad and Tobago. This study explored teacher efficacy for classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement among in-service secondary school teachers in Trinidad and Tobago. Analyses examined differences in teacher efficacy by gender, age, teaching experience, curriculum concentration, and school type.

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ABSTRACT:

Teacher efficacy is largely unexplored among teachers in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean, resulting in a deficit in understanding of teachers' beliefs about their ability to teach. This is disconcerting because teachers' beliefs have been demonstrated to influence teacher and student outcomes. This study examined teacher efficacy of secondary school teachers at the beginning of a 10-month in-service teacher-training programme, using the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (long form) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) to measure overall teacher efficacy, and teacher efficacy for classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement. It was assumed that these four aspects of teachers' daily life were measurable using the selected scale, given its widespread use globally.

Participants were 174 untrained teachers whose ages ranged from 23 to 56 years ($M = 35.25$ years, $SD = 6.45$), who taught for 2 to 30 years ($M = 9.44$ years, $SD = 5.45$) at government schools and government-assisted schools. They were trained in Mathematics, Science, English, Educational Administration, Visual and Performing Arts, Social Studies, Modern Languages, and Information Technology. Data were analysed using SPSS 20. Variables were screened to ensure that their distributional characteristics were accurate, complete, and consistent with the underlying assumptions of proposed statistical tests. Dependent variables were overall teacher efficacy, teacher efficacy for instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. Independent variables were participants' gender, age, years of teaching experience, curriculum concentration, and school type. Analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics to determine the extent to which measures of teacher efficacy differed by teachers' gender, age, number of years of teaching experience, school type, and area of curriculum concentration.

Strong positive correlations ($r \geq .7$) were found between all measures of teacher efficacy. Measures of teacher efficacy did not vary significantly by gender and years of teaching. Males and females reported equally strong teacher efficacy for student engagement, but males reported stronger teacher efficacy than females in the other three areas. Older teachers reported significantly stronger overall efficacy and efficacy for classroom management than younger colleagues. More experienced teachers reported higher teacher efficacy across all dimensions than less experienced teachers. Teachers at government-assisted schools reported significantly higher overall efficacy, efficacy for classroom management and student engagement than those at government schools. Teachers in all curriculum concentrations reported strongest teacher efficacy for instructional strategies, but weakest teacher efficacy beliefs for classroom management. Teachers in the Mathematics concentration reported the weakest teacher efficacy

across all measures, while those in the Educational Administration concentration reported the strongest across all measures.

A qualitative study of teacher efficacy in Trinidad and Tobago is recommended to expose the sources of efficacy information teachers prioritize throughout their practice, and how these sources of information may be used by teacher educators to structure teacher training that provides teachers with strategies that strengthen their teacher efficacy. Research should also determine the contextual factors related to the school environment that influence teacher efficacy through in-depth interviews with teachers and classroom observations of their practice. Equally important is the study of the relationship between teacher efficacy and student outcomes like student efficacy and achievement across curriculum areas.

Keywords: in-service secondary teachers, teacher training, teacher efficacy, classroom management, student engagement, instructional strategies