



Exploring the validity of a teachers' self-efficacy scale in five countries

Robert M. Klassen^{a,*}, Mimi Bong^b, Ellen L. Usher^c, Wan Har Chong^d, Vivien S. Huan^d,
Isabella Y.F. Wong^d, Tasos Georgiou^e

^a University of Alberta, Department of Educational Psychology, 6-102 Education North, Edmonton, AB, Canada T6G 2G5

^b Department of Education, Korea University, Anam-dong, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul 136-701, Korea

^c Educational and Counseling Psychology, University of Kentucky, 249 Dickey Hall, Lexington, KY 40506-0017, USA

^d Psychological Studies Academic Group, National Institute of Education, 1 Nanyang Walk, Singapore 637616

^e Corner Thucydides and Kimon, 1434 Nicosia, Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article was twofold. The first purpose was to test the validity of the Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) in five settings—Canada, Cyprus, Korea, Singapore, and the United States. The second purpose was, by extension, to establish the importance of the teacher self-efficacy construct across diverse teaching conditions. Multi-group confirmatory factor analysis was used to better understand the measurement invariance of the scale across countries, after which the relationship between the TSES, its three factors, and job satisfaction was explored. The TSES showed convincing evidence of reliability and measurement invariance across the five countries, and the relationship between the TSES and job satisfaction was similar across settings. The study provides general evidence that teachers' self-efficacy is a valid construct across culturally diverse settings and specific evidence that teachers' self-efficacy showed a similar relationship with teachers' job satisfaction in five contrasting settings.

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1. Introduction

Teachers across the world face a host of new and ongoing demands resulting from increasing workloads, shifting policies and expectations, and societal changes. The beliefs teachers hold about their capabilities to face these challenges play a strong role in influencing student learning and teachers' job commitment (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). In recent years, teachers' self-efficacy (TSE)—beliefs teachers hold that they can positively influence student learning—has been shown to demonstrate a profound influence on the daily lives of teachers and their students. Although considerable research has shown that TSE has a strong influence on teachers and students, few studies have explored the validity of TSE across groups of teachers from different settings. In particular, international comparisons provide researchers with new knowledge about the universality and generalizability of important psychological constructs, and allow future investigations to include the newly validated constructs in a more diverse range of settings (e.g., Marsh & Hau, 2004). The purpose of the present investigation is to test the validity of a TSE measure across teaching levels

(elementary/middle school and secondary) in five countries representing three geographically and culturally contrasting regions: North America (Canada and the United States), East Asia (Korea and Singapore) and Europe (Cyprus).

1.1. Teachers' self-efficacy

According to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy beliefs refer to individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to successfully carry out a particular course of action. Considerable research supports the claim that self-efficacy is an important influence on human achievement in a wide variety of settings, including education, health, sports, and work (Bandura, 1997). In educational contexts, research has shown that students' self-efficacy plays an important role in influencing achievement and behavior, but there is increasing evidence that *teachers'* sense of self-efficacy also plays a key role in influencing important academic outcomes. Teachers' self-efficacy is related to higher levels of student achievement and student motivation, and has been shown to influence teachers' instructional practices, enthusiasm, commitment, and teaching behavior (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). Teachers with low levels of self-efficacy experience more difficulties with student

* Corresponding author. Fax: +1 780 492 1318.

E-mail address: robert.klassen@ualberta.ca (R.M. Klassen).

misbehavior, are pessimistic about student learning, and experience higher levels of job-related stress and lower levels of job satisfaction (Bandura, 1997; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Steca, 2003; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991). The relationship between TSE and job satisfaction is especially important because job satisfaction has been shown to be significantly related to job performance across a wide range of work settings (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001), and more importantly, is considered a critical element affecting teachers' attitudes and efforts in their daily work with children (Caprara et al., 2003). Exploring the relationship between TSE and job satisfaction may have implications for teachers' job performance, and by extension, the academic achievement of students.

Research on TSE dates back to educational studies carried out by the RAND organization in the mid-1970s, when two questionnaire items were created to investigate teachers' beliefs in their ability to influence student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Gibson and Dembo's (1984) influential measure of TSE extended the RAND measure and consisted of two factors, one measuring *personal teaching efficacy* (PTE)—essentially teachers' competence beliefs—and the other measuring *general teaching efficacy* (GTE)—teachers' expectancy beliefs that their effectiveness is limited by environmental obstacles (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). The relevance and conceptual soundness of GTE has been called into question, with concerns raised especially about the inclusion of a measure of environmental obstacles under the banner of self-efficacy (e.g., Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Although environmental factors influence individual functioning, theorists insist that self-efficacy is concerned not with perceptions of external obstacles, but with self-referent beliefs about capabilities to carry out a course of action, even in the face of challenging external factors (e.g., Bandura, 1997).

Concerns with the Gibson and Dembo measure, and especially with the GTE factor, led to the creation of a number of new TSE measures, most prominent of which is the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) created by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998). Later, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) created a 24-item long form, and a 12-item short form, with correlations between the two forms ranging from .95 to .98. The authors carried out extensive testing of the validity and reliability of the scale through consultation with a large number of pre-service and practicing teachers to identify key content areas, through conducting several rounds of factor analysis, and through correlating the measure with other teacher self-efficacy measures (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The TSES 12-item short form—the measure of interest in the current article—is hypothesized to consist of a three-factor measure that assesses a teacher's confidence to use effective instructional strategies, to manage student conduct and classroom behaviors, and to engage all students in learning. Items in the measure assess teachers' beliefs in their capabilities to carry out a course of desired action, and include the stem, "How much can you do to...?" Researchers have investigated the TSES measure in American settings (e.g., Knobloch & Whittington, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, 2007; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007), and in Greece with student teachers (Poulou, 2007). The TSES has been labeled "superior to previous measures of teacher efficacy in that it has a unified and stable factor structure" and because it is closely aligned with self-efficacy theory (Woolfolk Hoy & Burke Spero, 2005, p. 354). In spite of a call for additional testing and validation of the TSES, no studies have explored the measure using international comparisons, nor have researchers compared how this three-factor model of TSE is related to outcome variables such as teachers' job satisfaction.

1.2. Teachers' self-efficacy in international perspective

Cross-national¹ comparisons are useful theory-builders because they provide researchers with "a valuable heuristic basis to test the external validity and generalizability of their measures, theories, and models" (Marsh & Hau, 2004, p. 59) and because these comparisons offer a way of exploring the universality of psychological constructs and measures (Triandis, 1996).

Comparison of teacher motivation across diverse settings is educative because teaching practices and conditions show considerable variation within and across countries, and variations in teaching environments and teaching practices may influence teachers' beliefs about their roles and responsibilities (Ho & Hau, 2004). For example, teachers in East Asian settings may have very different day-to-day working experiences than teachers in North American settings due to differences in teacher preparation, induction, professional development, and expectations for student behavior and achievement (Preus, 2007; Yeom & Ginsburg, 2007). Teachers in European settings like Cyprus may work under a more highly centralized education system than most North American teachers, and may be motivated to enter teaching for reasons different than American teachers (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004). Although TSE may be a universally valid factor underlying teaching and learning, there has been little research exploring whether TSE operates in similar ways in settings that provide different teaching and learning experiences.

Almost all TSE studies to date have been conducted in a single, usually culturally Western setting, with scant attention paid to how self-efficacy operates in diverse contexts. Gorrell and colleagues (Gorrell & Hwang, 1995; Lin, Gorrell, & Taylor, 2002) conducted a series of studies investigating TSE in Korea and Taiwan, but their studies focused on pre-service teachers, and did not include cross-national comparisons. Ho and Hau (2004) conducted what might be the only study designed to explore TSE using a cross-national comparison. Their study with groups of teachers from Hong Kong and Australia borrowed items from Gibson and Dembo's (1984) measure and from other studies resulting in a TSE measure that included components of personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy.

In spite of the value of the cross-national analysis present by Ho and Hau (2004), the self-efficacy instrument they used may not be well aligned with accepted theoretical conceptions of self-efficacy. The majority of items assessed ability judgments (e.g., "I have very effective classroom management skills," and "I am good at counseling students") that bear closer resemblance to self-concept than self-efficacy. In addition, items composing the fourth factor, labeled "External Influences," bear even less resemblance to self-efficacy (e.g., "A teacher is limited in what he/she can achieve in student discipline because of the current values of society") (Ho & Hau, 2004, p. 317) because they do not assess teachers' self-referent judgments, and more closely resemble the environmental obstacles included in the Gibson and Dembo (1984) GTE measure. Whereas self-concept reflects an assessment of skill and ability, and is formed through social and self-comparisons, self-efficacy is a judgment of capability to perform a particular task (Bong, 2006; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Pajares, 1996). Self-efficacy researchers have suggested that items designed to measure self-efficacy should be phrased "in terms of *can do* rather than *will do*. *Can* is a judgment of capability; *will* is a statement of intention" (Bandura, 2006, p. 308, italics in original). Self-efficacy instruments should focus not on assessing current skills, but on beliefs "about what one can do under different sets of conditions with whatever skills one possesses" (Bandura, 1997, p. 37). In light of the theoretical

¹ We use the term *international* and *cross-national* rather than *cross-cultural* to describe the study because the primary defining comparison feature is country of residence, and cultural dimensions were not directly measured.

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