

## TEACHER'S PEDAGOGICAL SELF-EFFICACY FOR ENSURING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** Nowadays we are living with conscious awareness of change around us. Therefore, openness to change and problem-solving skills become essential transversal competences for everyone. However, teachers often perceive changes in their work environment as problems rather than challenge and opportunity to improve the quality of education. Thus, persistence and creativity in solving problems becomes an important indicator of a teacher's self-efficacy. To promote the quality of education, teachers' pedagogical self-efficacy becomes important, which significantly affects the learning achievements of students. Pedagogical self-efficacy consists of the teacher's confidence in abilities regarding lesson planning, student assessment, choice of teaching strategies, etc. One of the basic principles of educational progress is inclusive education and acceptance of diversity. Creating a positive school psycho-emotional environment and creative pedagogical strategies also become important. The literature review is used as a research method to summarize the theoretical foundation of the topic. Theories provide a comprehensive explanation of a particular aspect of nature of the phenomenon of self-efficacy supported by evidence. The aim of the publication is to analyse the aspects of teacher's pedagogical self-efficacy focusing on the way it affects the quality of education, which also includes the promotion of students' internal motivation and preventing behavioural problems.

**Keywords:** confidence, teacher, inclusive education, motivation, pedagogical self-efficacy, positive social-emotional school environment.

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### Introduction

The study "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Latvia" (2020) emphasizes that a national project to change the school curriculum "School 2030" focuses on one of the basic principles of education which is inclusive education and acceptance of diversity.

Diversity of students, including diversity in ethnicity, language, abilities, talents, etc., is recognized and highly valued. Their different learning needs are met with the help of open dialogue and diverse methods and approaches, as well as safe and supportive environment with no discrimination of any kind to be tolerated (Beizītere, Grumolte-Lerhe, Ziemane, 2020). It is the teacher who is the main implementer of inclusive education at school. Not only the theoretical knowledge, skills, and experience of the teacher, but also his/her pedagogical self-efficacy and desire to implement inclusive education become important (Reigeluth, 1993; Desombre, Delaval & Jury, 2021; Nīmante, 2021; Athira & Poornima, 2023).

The order of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia "Education Development Guidelines for 2021-2027" highlights: "insufficiently inclusive and emotionally safe environment in educational institutions" is mentioned as one of the problems to be solved (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, 2021).

To improve the situation, parents' participation in the education process and teachers' pedagogical self-efficacy, which significantly affects the learning achievements of students become important (Perera, Calkins, & Part, 2019).

Bandura (1997) in the theory of self-efficacy emphasizes that the provision of inclusive and emotionally safe environment, as well as the active cooperation of parents, are

qualities that can be largely influenced by the teacher's pedagogical self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). At the same time, teachers can also perceive cooperation and communication with parents as a challenge, especially in relation to problems caused by student behaviour (Šķietniece, Pļaviņa, n.d.; Laiveniece, 2023).

Hattie (2009) believes that although it is the role of the teacher to provide support, feedback and discipline in the classroom, there is often less effort needed to demotivate students in comparison with making a lot of effort to motivate students, not giving up reaching learning goals (Hattie, 2009). He mentions persistence as one of the key indicators of teacher self-efficacy.

The professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competences required for teachers are emphasized in *the Standard of the Teaching Profession of Latvia*. As well as the ability to assess the needs of individual development, learning, personality, and social growth according to the approach of inclusive education, the ability to create inclusive, intellectually stimulating, physically and emotionally safe, development needs-oriented and cooperative learning environment, as well as the ability to develop the social and emotional competences are highlighted (Profesiju standarti, 2017). However, students' motivation and achievements are also closely related to teachers' positive attitude towards their work (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

The aim of the publication is to analyse the aspects of teacher's pedagogical self-efficacy focusing on the way it affects the quality of education, which also includes the promotion of students' internal motivation and preventing behavioural problems.

## **Methodology**

The literature review is used as a research method to summarize the theoretical foundation of the topic. Theories provide a comprehensive explanation of a particular aspect of nature of the phenomenon of self-efficacy supported by evidence.

## **Characteristics of Pedagogical Self-efficacy and Its Importance in Ensuring the Quality of Education**

How a teacher teaches is closely related to how a student learns. When planning a lesson, the teacher should consider not only what he wants to teach, but also how to organize the lessons in such a way as to promote and support the students' learning (Namsone & Čakāne, 2023, 109).

The formation of self-efficacy is a very complex process and is influenced by various factors. Self-efficacy is not fixed, but rather a generative ability in which cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural skills are organized to achieve a goal (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy affects what activities a person chooses, what goals are set, how persistently they pursue a goal, and how much effort they invest (Damberga, 2015). However, one cannot talk about self-efficacy in cases where some irregular activity is considered. Self-efficacy can be seen when a job is done regularly, overcoming various obstacles (Bandura, 1997). Pedagogical self-efficacy is considered as a very important quality of a teacher (Fischer & Bilz, 2021).

Successful performance in professional work increases self-efficacy, while failure can also decrease it. Therefore, the teacher's cognitive understanding of ongoing processes at school becomes especially important (Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004).

In the process of promoting self-efficacy, important aspects are:

- the development of new knowledge, skills and competencies, such as professional development, experience, pedagogical observations, as well as mentor support for new teachers;
- regular self-assessment (assessment of task complexity and personal competence) (Bandura, 1997);
- the teacher's ability to be self-organized and proactive in his behaviour (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003);
- confidence in one's abilities to influence positive changes in students (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001);
- the teacher's skills and actions in the lesson, which significantly affect the students' learning results (Namsone, Čakāne, Volkinšteine, & Butkēviča, 2018).
- self-control and the ability to use the most appropriate teaching methods in the learning process, to promote students' internal motivation (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001);
- internal motivation in achieving pedagogical goals (Bandura, 1997);
- conviction that problems or mistakes are not proof of failure or inability, but the need to update new approaches and strategies in professional work (Bandura, 1997);
- openness to receiving feedback from colleagues and students (Čakāne, 2018; Vanags & Mazpane, 2019);
- taking responsibility, for example implementing new teaching methods (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003);
- awareness of diversity in the context of students' unique abilities as a resource and value;
- openness to cooperation (ESIAA, 2012).

However, sometimes embracing diversity and meeting unique individual needs of students can make teachers feel anxious (Laiveniece, 2023). Therefore, it is necessary to help reveal the potential of inclusive education (Dignath et al., 2022). It can be done through creating a support system that develops pedagogical self-efficacy in the educational institution (Bandura, 1997).

A teacher with high self-efficacy guides the student to awareness, improving mindfulness about learning process (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). On the other hand, a teacher with low self-efficacy emphasizes control, as well as belief that not all students can be successful in the learning process (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). A teacher's pedagogical self-efficacy also affects students' motivation, thus also learning, which, in turn, is positively affected by autonomy and a certain structure, as well as belonging and competence. On the other hand, a controlling environment negatively affects students and increases stress level (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It should be noted that there is a possibility that a teacher can simultaneously feel self-efficacious in one area, but less effective in another (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). See Table 1 "*Theoretical framework of pedagogical self-efficacy*" for a summary of theoretical sources.

*Table 1 Theoretical framework of pedagogical self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003; Damberga, 2015; Čakāne, 2018; Vanags & Mazpane, 2019; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; ESIAA, 2012)*

Factor forming self-efficacy	Description of self-efficacy forming factor
Self-efficacy as a generative ability	Cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural skills are organized to achieve a goal (Bandura, 1997) Implementing new teaching methods (Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003).
Self-efficacy as a factor affecting choice of activities	Goal setting and the effort invested in achieving it (Damberga, 2015). Motivation in achieving pedagogical goals (Bandura, 1997). Confidence in one's abilities to influence positive changes in students (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).
Regularity of expression of self-determination	Self-efficacy manifests regularly, overcoming various obstacles (Bandura, 1997).
Teacher's self-efficacy contributes to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- regular self-assessment (assessment of task complexity and personal competence) (Bandura, 1997);</li> <li>- conviction that problems or mistakes are not proof of failure or inability, but the need to update new approaches and strategies in professional work (Bandura, 1997);</li> <li>- openness to receiving feedback from colleagues and students (Čakāne, 2018; Vanags &amp; Mazpane, 2019);</li> <li>- openness to cooperation (ESIAA, 2012);</li> <li>- confidence in one's abilities to influence positive changes in students (Tschannen-Moran &amp; Woolfolk Hoy, 2001);</li> <li>- self-control and the ability to use the most appropriate teaching methods in the learning process, to promote students' internal motivation (Tschannen-Moran &amp; Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).</li> </ul>

Thus, it can be concluded that pedagogical self-efficacy consists of: the teacher's confidence, student assessment skills, choice of teaching strategies, teacher's ability to solve behavioural problems in the learning process, emphasizing the promotion of students' awareness; learning achievement-oriented lesson planning; effective classroom management and collaboration skills; openness to diversity in the context of students' unique abilities, giving and receiving feedback, and taking responsibility (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, Friedman & Kass, 2002; Poulou, Reddy & Dudek, 2018; Čakāne, 2018; Vanags & Mazpane, 2019; Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003; ESIAA, 2012).

### **A favourable psycho-emotional environment for the realization of teachers' self-efficacy**

Lack of students' engagement in class work, as well as low learning achievements are attributes might be associated with students' character and personality traits, for e.g., laziness can be mentioned as the reason for poor academic achievement. However, quite often in classroom situations there can be the lack of positive psycho-emotional environment, which contributes to the student's belief that the classroom is a safe and valuable place to be and to be motivated to learn (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012).

The learning process takes place mainly in the classroom – an environment where students and teachers interact socially and emotionally (with each other and in groups). As a result of this interaction, the emotional climate of the classroom is formed (Reyes et al., 2012). Reyes et al. believe that it is essential for a teacher to be able to analyze different situations in the school environment from the student's perspective (Reyes et al., 2012) as students with a higher sense of belonging to their school are more oriented towards cooperation, feel teacher's support and receive feedback and are more satisfied with life (Kangro, Kiseļova, 2019).

Survey results show that 35.5% of children have experienced emotional abuse in Latvia. Emotional abuse affects person's well-being and health (both physical and psychological) (OECD, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the importance of inclusive environment at school. Inclusive environment is a result of a set of activities, which can be reached "by different paths and each may need different support" (Oliņa, 2020), creating a positive socio-emotional school experience (Heyder, Südkamp, & Steinmayr, 2020), to provide full-fledged support and understanding the nature of the special needs of students (Beizītere et al., 2020). There are conflicting studies on what qualities a teacher should possess to create a positive school psycho-emotional environment. However, in most cases it is the teacher with high pedagogical confidence who will intervene and solve the problem situation, for example in the case of mobbing (Fischer & Bilz, 2021). Students who study at schools with a high sense of collective self-efficacy of teachers are more tolerant towards each other (Fischer & Bilz, 2021). Thus, teachers' self-efficacy becomes an important prerequisite for good relationships between students.

Creating a positive school psycho-emotional environment is one of the areas of influence of pedagogical self-efficacy, which includes indicators such as positive learning opportunities, reduction of disruptive behaviour and psychological and physical safety. A positive school's psycho-emotional environment depends both on the professional competence of the teacher and on the student's motivation, set goals and attitude towards learning, which is largely revealed in individual's behaviour. However, it is the teacher, with his/her pedagogical competence including classroom management skills, who chooses activities that match the students' interests and provides the basis for a positive school psycho-emotional environment. Hoffmann, Närhi, Savolainen, & Schwab (2021) emphasize the student's responsibility for maintaining a positive school psycho-emotional environment and conclude that:

- a) student behaviour problems are largely the result of a lack of respectful relationships between teachers and students.
- b) creative pedagogical strategies become relevant for creating a positive school psycho-emotional environment (Hoffmann, Närhi, Savolainen, & Schwab, 2021).

The school is also a driver of change in the local community (Trigo-Ibáñez & Santos Díaz, 2023) and the teacher's ability to create a positive environment is an important prerequisite for positive changes not only in students, but also in society.

Ryan & Deci (2017) emphasize that listening to students and responding to their questions promote students' motivation and reduces unacceptable behaviour. They also argue that the need for autonomy, belonging and competence is inherent for students (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It is the belonging and emotional attachment to the school environment that contributes to the acquisition of competences in later life, as opposed to an emotionally unresponsive learning environment in which they feel disconnected from school and are less involved (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012)

Individual's motivation is higher when students feel competent, have sufficient autonomy, set goals, receive feedback, and are respected by others (Dörnyei, 2001), while humiliation, demotivating test results or conflicts with teachers or peers can directly affect the student's commitment to learning goals and engagement (Hattie, 2009). Therefore, teacher's self-efficacy becomes relevant (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

For inclusive education to be implemented successfully, it is also necessary to take care of cooperation with parents, which is also one of the directions of the Education Development Guidelines for 2021-2017 (Order No. 436 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, 2021). A teacher's sense of self-efficacy also plays a big role in attracting parents to the school and the child's education process (Bandura, 1997).

## Conclusions

Learning achievements of students and an inclusive and emotionally safe environment in an educational institution are facilitated by the pedagogical self-efficacy of teachers. However, the active cooperation of parents with the school becomes important as well. Creating a positive school psycho-emotional environment is one of the areas of influence of pedagogical self-efficacy, which includes indicators such as positive learning opportunities, reduction of disruptive behaviour and psychological and physical safety.

Improvement of new knowledge, skills and competences, regular self-assessment, teacher's ability to be self-organized, confidence in their ability to influence positive changes in students, teacher's skills, and activities in the lesson, which significantly affect students' learning results, self-control and skill become relevant in promoting teacher's self-efficacy. Self-efficacy leads to choosing the most appropriate teaching methods in the learning process, to promote students' internal motivation, goal achievement, the belief that problems or mistakes are not proof of failure or inability, but the need to use new approaches and strategies in professional work, taking responsibility and diversity in the context of students' unique abilities as resource and value awareness.

Pedagogical self-efficacy is formed by the teacher's confidence in his/her abilities regarding lesson planning, student evaluation, choice of teaching strategies, as well as the teacher's ability to solve behavioural problems in the learning process, emphasizing the promotion of students' awareness. Perseverance is also an indicator of teacher self-efficacy.

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