

PROMOTING SELF-EFFICACY IN THE CLASSROOM: SELF-EFFICACY AND STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

Basma JARJOURA

Moldova State University

"If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning" (Mahatma Gandhi). This article aims to shed light on the concept of self-efficacy in social - cognitive theory, and will try to answer the question does academic self-efficacy affects learning motivation and achievements and vice versa.

Keywords: motivation, students' motivation, social cognitive theory, self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy.

PROMOVAREA AUTOEFICIENȚEI: CONDIȚIE A MOTIVAȚIEI STUDENȚILOR

„Dacă am convingerea că pot ceva să fac, voi dobândi, cu siguranță, capacitatea de a face acest lucru, chiar dacă nu aş avea-o la început” (Mahatma Gandhi). În acest articol ne propunem să reflectăm conceptul de autoeficacitate în teoria social-cognitivă și să încercăm să răspundem la întrebarea: cum afectează autoeficacitatea motivația de învățare și realizările, și viceversa?

Cuvinte-cheie: motivație, teoria social-cognitivă, autoeficacitate, autoeficacitate academică.

Self-efficacy is considered one of the most important indicators of learning motivation and has been presented as an explanation for motivational behavior. Studies have revealed that a perceived high self-efficacy with respect to a given task strengthens the tendency to choose that task, to persevere in carrying it out despite difficulties, to perform well, and even to evaluate the task as important and enjoyable [20].

Social cognitive theory and self-efficacy

Social cognitive theory concentrates on the way people acquire knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, beliefs, and emotions through their interactions with observations of others. Social cognitive theory theorizes that behavior represents an interaction of the individual with the environment [26].

Bandura's social cognitive theory assumes triadic reciprocal interaction of: (1) personal factors; (2) behaviors and; (3) environmental influences. These factors interact and affect each other (see figure 1 down below). According to Bandura, motivation is considered as goal-oriented behavior which is maintained by the individual's expectations of foreseen outcomes and their own self-efficacy for performing those actions. Self-efficacy is considered a key motivational process that impacts students' task choices, effort, persistence, and achievement [2].

Motivated learning is not about performing or completing a task but rather the motivation to acquire skills and strategies. Self-efficacy, at the beginning of a learning activity, differs among students mostly because of differences in personal characteristics, experiences and social support. In later stages of the learning activity, students' self-efficacy is impacted by task related variables. Self-evaluation of progress enhances self-efficacy and sustains motivation [2].

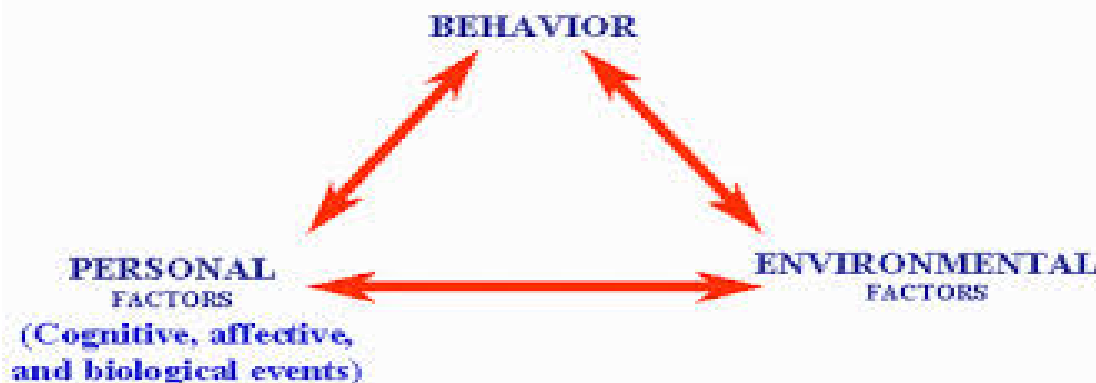


Fig.1. Social cognitive theory.

Social cognitive theory has been applied to self-regulation where the individuals systematically direct their cognition, behaviors and affects toward the achievement of their goals. Self-regulation assumes that student have some choice available during task engagement. Many researchers see volitional processes, which is of increasing importance, as mediating the relation between goals and goal-directed actions [26, p.166, 167].

Self-efficacy theory derived from social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura [1], and it is a main area of interest in the research of motivation. Motivation is strongly related to how people see their abilities in particular situation [3]. Self-efficacy is a crucial variable affecting learning and motivation [6]; therefore it is an important factor in educational research. Bandura [4, p.2] defined self-efficacy as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations". Also Zimmerman [32] refers to self-efficacy as a performance-based measure of perceived capability.

Academic self-efficacy amongst students is defined as "the extent of a student's belief that he can organize and carry out needed behaviors and actions in order to attain the educational and academic performance that he considers desirable [31, p.203]. Numerous studies have indicated that academic self-efficacy can endow to raising academic performance and academic motivation and achievements among students [8; 12; 13; 20; 21; 33; 34].

Zimmerman [30] studied self-efficacy in colleges. The researcher showed that perceptions of self-efficacy are one of the characteristics of effective learning that leads to academic success. He claims that successful students have more motivation and active involvement in learning than passive students. Students with effective learning style report more self-efficacy. Therefore, self-efficacy is a motivation to learn and also a result of learning.

Also Skaalvik & Skaalvik [28] indicate that in an educational environment, the self-efficacy of both teachers and students are important. The self-efficacy of students influences their achievements, while self-efficacy of teachers influences their teaching behaviors and as a result the motivation and achievements of their students. Therefore, self-efficacy is a significant predictor of students' motivation and learning [30; 32] and researchers have verified its discriminated validity as well as convergent validity in predicting common motivational outcomes.

The development of self-efficacy among students

According to social cognitive theory people construct a perception of self-efficacy for themselves by way of processing information that comes to them from following resources (see figure 2 down below [2; 6]):

- A. Reconstructed personal experiences or past performances. Success raises the level of efficacy while failure lowers it. In the case of students, success in courses in previous institutions of learning can be considered successful personal experiences that may improve academic self-efficacy [2; 29].
- B. Observing others' performance, learning experiences through the observation of models and learning by imitation of others is the second type of information source for self-efficacy [6; 16].
- C. Verbal persuasion, that is to say, persuasion throughout things one receives from others and that convince the learner of his ability to perform a task successfully. The power and control of persuasion lies in the persuader's knowledge, skills and reliability [17; 18].
- D. One's physiological and emotional state is the last information source. Tension, stress and anxiety are sometimes seen as indicators of a fear of failure, of inability, or of a lack of skill [5; 6; 24].

Self-efficacy focuses on the learner's personal beliefs as a vital component that can predict what a person will do with his or her knowledge and skills, and can also determine success or failure at a learning setting [6]. Other components of motivation such as self-image, anxiety or the value of a task, affect academic results; though, according to Bandura [6] their effect on academic performance derives mostly from the sense of confidence with which the learning approaches academic tasks. This claim by Bandura is supported by a considerable body of research.

Researchers have noted that the component of belief in one's self-efficacy in statistical models that contain additional motivation variables as well is the only such variable that has a direct effect on performance [34]. When people choose to enter into situations in which they expect to perform some activity successfully, the greater their sense of self-efficacy the more complex and difficult the situations that they are willing to face, or the more challenging the situations demanding a high level of performance that they dare attack [2; 6; 22; 31].

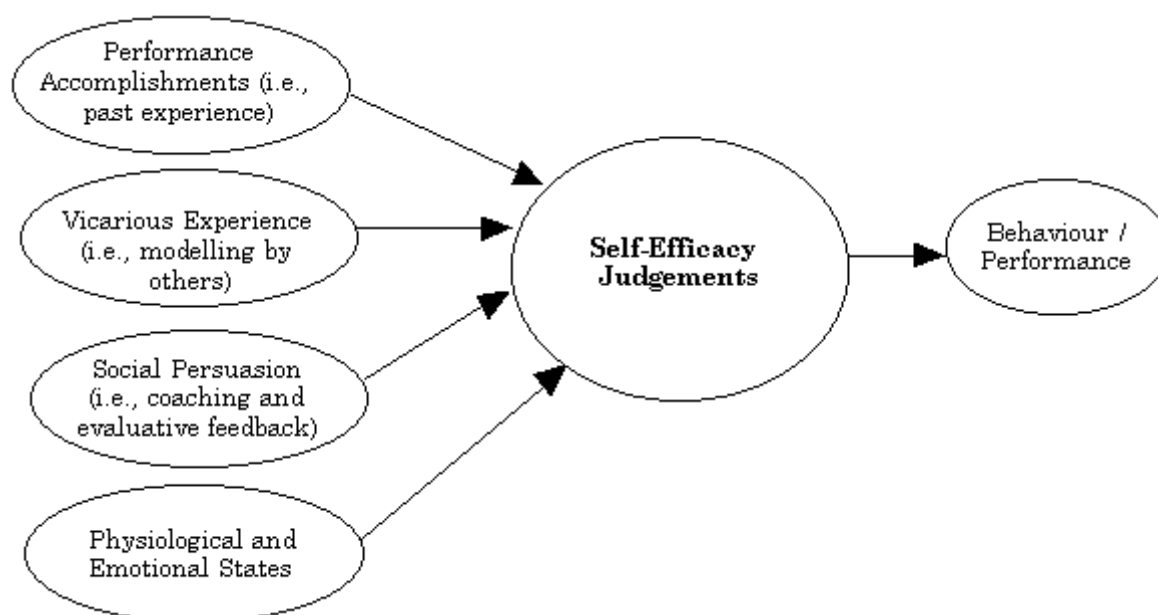


Fig.2. Sources of self-efficacy information.

Self-efficacy beliefs have also shown convergent validity in influencing such main indices of academic motivation as choice of activities, level of effort, persistence, and emotional reactions [32, p.86]. There is evidence [6] that self-efficacious students participate more willingly, work harder, stick with the assignment longer, and have less undesirable emotional reactions when they come across difficulties than do those who doubt their capabilities.

Self-efficacy affects the performance rate and the quantity of invested energy, effort and determination [2; 6; 7; 16; 19]. It also affects the prediction of the degree of interest in academic subjects, motivation and leaning among students [11; 13; 23]. These findings indicate that self-efficacy affects motivation and cognition through its influence on the extent of student interest in the task, perseverance in its performance, the goals which students set for themselves, their choices and the way they use cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies for self-management.

Saada [15] examined the connection between self-direction and learning and self-efficacy for teaching among students of education at Arab teachers' colleges, and found a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and learning (learning motivation) and personal didactic self-efficacy. However, the findings indicated the lack of a correlation between self-efficacy for learning and general didactic self-efficacy. These findings are consistent with previous studies that showed that students perceive their ability to cope with various academic tasks in light of their abilities as expressed in self-directed learning, including perseverance, planning and problem solving.

A perusal of the scholarly literature on self-efficacy gives the impression that the concept is significantly and positively correlated with many components of motivational behavior, thus possibly pointing to its importance as a critical predictor of motivational behavior and learning. The quantity of research on this topic clearly shows that self-efficacy plays a role in prediction and mediation between a number of ability components (for example, skill, knowledge, ability and previous knowledge) and achievements in the future [25].

A number of components have been studied in the context of motivational behavior. In the present study we shall also address the variable of the student's school year. Previous studies on this subject did not produce consistent results. While some studies point to a rise in motivation with increasing "academic experience" [10] others found a reduction [9]. Such a mixed result was also found with respect to differences between freshmen and junior students of education [14]. In the study conducted by Saada [15] on Arab students of education juniors were found to be more motivated than freshmen and sophomores, but freshmen were found to have "a more motivational behavior" than sophomores. Another study that tested motivation and satisfaction among students of education in the course of their studies found that their satisfaction in their studies and the motivation to become teachers lessened between the first and second year of their training. On the other hand, their sense of efficacy for teaching remained high throughout all four years [27].

Students' self-perceptions of efficacy are distinguished from related motivational constructs because of their specificity and close correspondence to performance tasks. These cognitive beliefs differ conceptually and psychometrically from trait self-belief measures due to their sensitivity to variations in experience and task and situational context. Two decades of research have evidently recognized the validity of self-efficacy as a predictor of students' motivation and learning. Although self-efficacy correlates with other related constructs, it has also shown discriminant validity by its unique to predict these outcomes when included in multiple regression analyses. It has shown convergent validity in predicting different forms of motivation, such as students' activity choices, effort, persistence, and emotional reactions. Lastly, when studied as a mediating variable in training studies, self-efficacy has proven to be responsive to improvements in students' methods of learning (especially those involving greater self-regulation) and foretelling of achievement outcomes. This empirical evidence of its role as a effective mediator of students' learning and motivation confirms the famous understanding of educators that students' self-beliefs about academic capabilities do play an essential role in their motivation to achieve [32, p.89].

Summary

The article exposed the efficiency of self-efficacy in learning setting, and its effects on academic motivation. Future studies can investigate the correlation between self-efficacy and academic motivation on different samples and populations. Also it could take various psychological and social variables into consideration, such as identity, language fluency, creativity, changes throughout the teacher training program and more. Promoting self observation, self-efficacy and creating opportunities for students to both learn and grow to understand that their behavior has positive and negative consequences.

Bibliography:

1. BANDURA, A. Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. In: *Psychological Review*, 1977, no.84, p.191-215 p.
2. BANDURA, A. *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*, 1986. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
3. BANDURA, A. Self-efficacy. In: V.S. Ramachandran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of human behavior*. New York, NY: Academic Press, 1984, no.4, p.71-81.
4. BANDURA, A. *Self-efficacy in Changing Societies*, Cambridge University Press, 1995a.
5. BANDURA, A. Self-efficacy. In: A.S.R. Manstead & M.Hewstone (Eds.). *Blackwell encyclopedia of social psychology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995b, p.453-454.
6. BANDURA, A. *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman, 1997.
7. BANDURA, A. & SCHUNK, D.H. Cultivating competence, self-efficacy and intrinsic interest through proximal self motivation. In: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1981, no.41, p.586-598.
8. CHEMERS, M.M., HU, L.T., & GARCIA, B.F. Academic self-efficacy and first-year college student performance and adjustment. In: *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2001, no.93(1), p.55-64.
9. FISHERMAN, S., SHAY, A. & KANIEL, S. Time management and self learning management among female students. In: *Dapim*, 2000, no.31, p.57-79.
10. LINDER, R.W. & HARRIS, B. Self-regulated learning: Its assessment and instructional implications. In: *Educational Research Quarterly*, 1993, no.16(2), p.29-37.
11. LINNENBRINK, E.A., & PINTRICH, P.R. The role of self-efficacy in student engagement and learning in the classroom. In: *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 2003, no.19(2), p.119-137.
12. PAJARES, F., & SCHUNK, D. *The development of academic self-efficacy. Development of achievement motivation*. United States, 2001.
13. PINTRICH, P.R. & DeGROOT, E.V. Motivational and self regulated learning components of classroom academic performance. In: *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1990, no.82, p.33-40.
14. RICH, Y., ILUZ, S. & KULA, A. *The Positions of Students of Education at Religious Teacher Training Institutions: Research in Education and Its Application in a Changing World*. The Conference of the Israeli Organization for the Study of Education, 2000 (in Hebrew).
15. SAADA, N. *The Correlation between Self-Orientation to Learning and Self-efficacy for Teaching among Students of Education in Arab Colleges in Israel*. Mofet Institute, 2007 (In Hebrew).
16. SCHUNK, D.H. Modeling and attribution effects on children's achievement: A self-efficacy analysis. In: *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1981, no.73, p.93-105.
17. SCHUNK, D.H. Verbal self-regulation as a facilitator of children's achievement and self-efficacy. In: *Journal is not in list - being petitioned*, 1982, no.1, p.265-277.

18. SCHUNK, D.H. Developing children's self-efficacy and skills: The roles of social comparative information and goal setting. In: *Journal is not in list - being petitioned*, 1983, no.8, p.76-86.
19. SCHUNK, D.H. 'Social-cognitive theory and self-regulated learning.' In: D.H. Schunk & B.J. Zimmerman (Eds.). *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: Theory, research and practice*. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989, p.83-110.
20. SCHUNK, D.H. Self-Efficacy and Academic Motivation. In: *Educational Psychologist*, 1991, no.26, p.207-231.
21. SCHUNK, D.H. Self-regulation of self-efficacy and attributions in academic settings. In: D.H. Schunk & B.J. Zimmerman (Eds.). *Self-regulation of learning and performance: Issues and educational applications*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1994, p.75-99.
22. SCHUNK, D.H. *Self monitoring as a motivator instruction with elementary school students*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Chicago, 1997.
23. SCHUNK, D.H. Self-efficacy for reading and writing: Influence of modeling, goal setting and self-evaluation. In: *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 2003, no.19, p.159-172.
24. SCHUNK, D.H., & ZIMMERMAN, B.J. *Self-Regulated Learning*. NY. Guilford Press, 1998.
25. SCHUNK, D. H., & PAJARES, F. The development of academic self-efficacy. In: A.Wigfield & J.S. Eccles (Eds.). *Development of achievement motivation*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2001, p.16-32.
26. SCHUNK, D.H., PINTRICH, P.R., MEECE, J.L. *Motivation in Education. Theory, Research, and Applications*. Pearson, Merrill Prentice Hall, 2008.
27. SEGAL, S. & EZER, H. *Pressure in Teacher Training and Its Implications for Student Teachers*, 2009, Mofet Institute (in Hebrew).
28. SKAALVIK, E.M. & SKAALVIK, S. Dimensions of teacher self-efficacy and relations with strain factors, perceived collective teacher efficacy and teacher burnout. In: *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2007, no.99, p.611-625.
29. ZELDIN, A. & PAJARES, F. Against the odds: Self-efficacy beliefs of women in mathematical, scientific, and technological careers. In: *American Educational Research Journal*, 1999, no.37(1), p.215-246.
30. ZIMMERMAN, B.J. Self-Regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview. In: *Educational Psychologist*, 1990, no.25, p.3-17.
31. ZIMMERMAN, B.J. Self regulation involves more than meta-cognition: A social cognitive perspective. In: *Educational Psychologist*, 1995, vol.30, no.4, p.217-221.
32. ZIMMERMAN, B.J. Self-Efficacy: An Essential Motive to Learn. In: *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 2000, no.25, p.82-91.
33. ZIMMERMAN, B.J., BANDURA, A., & MARTINEZ-PONS, M. Self-motivation for academic attainment: The role of self-efficacy beliefs and personal goal setting. In: *American educational research journal*, 1992, no.29(3), p.663-676.
34. ZIMMERMAN, B.J. & BANDURA, A. Impact of Self Regulatory influences on writing course attainment. In: *American Educational Research Journal*, 1994, vol.31, no.4, p.845-862.

Prezentat la 19.02.2014