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## TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' collective efficacy beliefs, teaching experience and perception of teacher empowerment

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**Abstract:** The present study aimed to contribute to the current findings of the relationship between collective efficacy perceptions of EFL teachers and their perception of teacher empowerment. To this end, 147 Iranian EFL teachers from a well-known institute in Tehran participated in the study. The instruments used were two questionnaires: Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale-Short Form and School Participant Empowerment Scale. A semi-structured interview was also conducted on 10 EFL teachers at the end of the study to discover what would be revealed from their attitudes toward different subscales of teacher empowerment and collective efficacy perceptions. The quantitative data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and independent samples *t*-test. Similarly, the qualitative data were also analyzed to find out the participants' attitudes toward different subscales on the two questionnaires and also to see to what extent those attitudes were similar to one another. The results showed that there was a positive, albeit weak, relationship between the two constructs (teacher empowerment and collective efficacy perceptions). It was also found that there was no significant difference between experienced and inexperienced teachers in terms of their perceptions of teacher empowerment and teacher collective efficacy.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

In any teaching context, particularly English language teaching settings, it is incumbent upon teachers to exert considerable influence on student learning. This study aims to contribute to the findings of the studies supporting the role of teachers with various ranges of teaching experience in an English as a foreign language context. More specifically, it is intended to find the relationship between teachers' perception of how much they see the teaching community to cooperate in order to support student learning and how much they are given freedom to act independently. The research data are collected from English language teachers in Iran. The findings show that there was a positive, albeit weak, relationship between the two variables (teacher empowerment and collective efficacy perceptions) and that there was no significant difference between experienced and inexperienced teachers in terms of their perception of teacher empowerment and teacher collective efficacy.

**Subjects: Continuing Professional Development; Education Studies; Sociology of Education**

**Keywords: collective efficacy; teacher collective efficacy; self-efficacy; teacher self-efficacy; empowerment; teacher empowerment**

## 1. Introduction

Over a quarter of a century ago, the term “self-efficacy” was proposed by Bandura (1977). In the educational arena the teachers’ sense of self-efficacy is one of the three kinds of efficacy beliefs which has been considered to be the core construct in this field. The other two kinds are the self-efficacy judgments of students and teachers’ beliefs regarding the collective efficacy of their schools. Of these three, perceived collective efficacy is the most recent construct which has gained insufficient attention.

As Bandura (1986, 1997) suggests, there are four sources for self-efficacy and collective efficacy that shape peoples’ beliefs regarding their capabilities: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and affective states. For Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000), mastery experiences are of significant importance in organizations. As a group, since teachers work in a social network with students and other teachers, they experience success and failure. According to Bandura (1993), schools with staff who believe in their capabilities to promote academic success are more likely to exert positive influence in schools. As evidence suggests, teachers’ sense of efficacy is highly related to organizational contexts such as positive school climate, effective instruction, and also teacher empowerment (Moore & Esselman, 1992). Moreover, as Bandura (1997) believes, a more powerful leader who can “unite the community for common cause” (p. 501) and empower the faculty might be able to enhance the collective efficacy of a school.

Based on pedagogical implications in an empirical research over the relationship between self-efficacy and teacher empowerment, organizational design of schools that would result in empowering teachers through the mechanism of collective efficacy is specifically highlighted (Hemric, Eury, & Shellman, 2010). Thus, based on the aforementioned evidence and more importantly, according to the theoretical and conceptual framework in the literature over changes in the outcomes in different cultures (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004), the present study primarily aims to investigate the relationship between collective efficacy beliefs of Iranian EFL teachers and their perception of teacher empowerment. Moreover, based on the importance of mastery experience and collective efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1995, 1997), which also relates to the outcomes of collective efficacy beliefs namely teacher empowerment (Goddard et al., 2004), this study aims to investigate the effect of teaching experience on collective efficacy and teacher empowerment perception of Iranian EFL teachers.

## 2. Review of literature

### 2.1. Teachers’ sense of self-efficacy

Since the perception of self-efficacy is based on people’s beliefs about their own capabilities, in educational settings based on what Bandura (1995) believes, teachers’ sense of efficacy demonstrates the effectiveness of learning environment. The very early reference to teacher efficacy is in a study by Barfield and Burlingame (1974) in which efficacy is defined as “a personality trait that enables one to deal effectively with the world” (p. 10).

### 2.2. Mastery experience

For Goddard et al. (2000, 2004), mastery experience is crucial for organizations and is the most powerful source of efficacy information; in fact, a substantial body of research emerged on organizational learning as well (Huber, 1996; March, 1996; Simon, 1996). Considering Huber’s analysis of organizations, like individuals, schools are likely to learn what they do and also tend to do what they learn well. Also, a strong powerful sense of collective efficacy should develop from coping with difficult situations through constant and collective effort because previous experiences of

organizations determine future success or failure (Huber, 1991). Therefore, through learning of group members organizational learning can simply occur.

### **2.3. Teachers' sense of collective efficacy**

This assumption of people with shared beliefs in their capabilities to produce effects collectively (Bandura, 1997) provides the basis for Goddard et al. (2000) to consider collective efficacy beliefs of teachers in schools. They define collective teacher efficacy beliefs as “the perceptions of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students” (p. 480). The recent research on collective efficacy beliefs is based on the evidence suggesting that they are closely related to group goal attainment; over the last 20 years, researchers have established a strong link between teacher behaviors and teacher efficacy that promote student achievement (Allinder, 1994; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1993; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

### **2.4. Empirical studies of teaching experience and efficacy beliefs**

To start with, in a study conducted by Lin and Tsai (1999), the teachers and experts exhibited higher self-efficacy than novice teachers. Brady, Liu, and Chiu (2008) also indicated a positive relationship between teachers' years of experience in teaching science and their personal science teaching efficacy scores.

Similarly in EFL setting, there are some studies indicating multiple results regarding teaching experience and its influence on efficacy beliefs of EFL teachers. In a study conducted by Akbari and Moradkhani (2010), the results indicated that experienced teachers (those with more than three years of teaching experience) had a considerably higher level of global efficacy, efficacy for classroom management, efficacy for student engagement, and efficacy for instructional strategies compared to the novice teachers. In the same vein, in another study by Nikpoor, Farsani, Tajbakhsh, and Kiyai (2011), teachers with eight and above years of teaching experience had the highest level of self-efficacy; however, teachers with 4–7 and 1–3 exhibited lower level of efficacy beliefs, respectively.

### **2.5. Teacher empowerment**

The term “teacher empowerment” began to emerge in the literature in the late 1980s. Recent interest in empowerment theory has penetrated to school organizations and participants within schools (Lightfoot, 1986; Maeroff, 1988, 1989). Blase and Blase (1999) observed that shared governance is still an emerging idea on the perception that empowering other teachers will enhance their commitment and capacity to do well for education. In a study by Short and Rinehart (1992) who investigated the relationship between the perceptions of teachers regarding their sense of empowerment, they identified six dimensions of teacher empowerment: decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact.

### **2.6. Teacher empowerment and collective efficacy**

From the organizational improvement point of view, Bandura (1997) suggests that a more powerful leader who can “unite the community for common cause” (p. 501) and empowers the faculty might be able to enhance the collective efficacy of a school. According to Goddard (2001), establishing an empowered faculty with a powerful leader who achieves collective performance goals is truly a challenge. Therefore, empowerment and strong leadership according to Goddard and Goddard (2001) may indeed be dimensions of organizational life that builds collective efficacy.

### **2.7. Research on efficacy beliefs and teacher empowerment**

In their study, Moore and Esselman (1992) examined the relationship among sense of efficacy, teacher empowerment, and school climate perceived by teachers. They found that teachers' sense of efficacy is significantly related to teacher empowerment and school climate that were highly influenced by principals.

In the similar vein, in a study conducted by Hipp (1997) the impacts of transformational leadership behavior on teacher efficacy based on Bandura's (1977, 1986) social cognitive theory was examined. In the first phase of the study, teachers' levels of personal and general efficacy were determined through survey and in the second phase, data were gathered through interviews and observations. The findings identified 10 leadership behaviors: beliefs in teacher capacity and models behavior promotes teacher empowerment and shared decision-making, inspires group purpose, provides personal and professional support, recognizes teacher efforts, promotes a sense of community, manages student behavior, encourages continual growth and innovation, and fosters teamwork and collaboration.

### 3. Research questions

Based on the aims of the present study, the following research questions were formulated:

- (1) Is there any significant relationship between collective efficacy and teacher empowerment beliefs among Iranian EFL teachers?
- (2) Does teaching experience have any significant effect on collective efficacy beliefs of Iranian EFL teachers?
- (3) Does teaching experience have any significant effect on the perceptions of teacher empowerment among EFL teachers?
- (4) What can be revealed qualitatively about teachers' attitudes toward collective efficacy and teacher empowerment through semi-structured interviews?

## 4. Method

### 4.1. Design

The design of the present study is correlational analysis and *ex post facto* design. Through correlational analysis, the relationship between collective efficacy beliefs and teacher empowerment was investigated. While using the *ex post facto* design, the variable of teaching experience was used to measure its effect on collective efficacy beliefs of the EFL teachers and also on their perception of the empowerment. Moreover, in order to get a deeper understanding of the results of the study and find out what could be revealed from the participants' attitudes toward collective efficacy and teacher empowerment, a semi-structured interview was conducted by the second researcher at the end of the study; the questions were based on different subscales on the two questionnaires.

### 4.2. Participants

The participants of the study were 147 Iranian EFL teachers (113 females and 54 males) of varying teaching experiences from a well-known institute in Tehran, where the present study was conducted. Their teaching experience ranged between 0 and 3 and more than 3 years; 67 of the participants were among the first category of teaching experience (0–3) and 80 of the participants were among the second category (more than 3 years). The institute, one of the largest in Iran, served as the source of population from which the participants were selected based on convenience sampling. In other words, the participants were from among different branches of the institute in Tehran. Due to the existence of practical issues, some of the participants (10 teachers) who were different in terms of teaching experience were selected to be interviewed based on the subscales on the two questionnaires. It is worth mentioning that all the participants consented to filling out the questionnaires and taking part in the semi-structured interview.

### 4.3. Instruments

#### 4.3.1. Teacher collective efficacy instrument

A review of the instruments used to measure collective efficacy of teachers indicated two widely used instruments: the Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale (Goddard et al., 2000) and the Collective Teacher Efficacy Scale-Short Form (Goddard, 2002). The first scale is the original instrument to measure

collective teacher efficacy beliefs, which was developed by adopting Gibson and Dembo's Teacher Efficacy Scale (1984) as a model. It consists of 21 items on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In order to dissolve the weighting problem of the items in the original scale and to provide a balanced measure (Goddard et al., 2000), Goddard (2002) developed a short form of Collective Teacher Efficacy with 12 items (see Appendix A). As he mentioned, the benefit of applying this new scale is "more parsimonious using 43% fewer items than the original" (p. 108). This scale comprises two dimensions. The first dimension is Group Competence (items 1 to 5), which refers to the "inferences about the faculty's teaching skills, methods, training, and expertise at the school level" (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 485). The second dimension is Task Analysis (items 6 to 12), which is "inferences about the challenges of teaching in that school, that is, what it would take for teachers in the school to be successful" (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 485). As the original scale, the new scale has the high reliability of .94% as measured with Cronbach's alpha (Goddard, 2002).

#### 4.3.2. *Teacher empowerment instrument*

The instrument School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) was used to assess the teachers' level of empowerment perceptions that has been developed as the result of two separate studies by Short and Rinehart (1992). The instrument contains 38 items that require participants to select their answers from among 5-point Likert-type scale categories ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (see Appendix B). Regarding the reliability of the scale, as Short and Rinehart (1992) stated, "because participant level of empowerment may fluctuate and not remain stable, a test-retest index of stability was deemed inappropriate for measures of reliability" (p. 956). This instrument also has a total Cronbach's alpha of .94. Additionally, reliability of the 6 subscales were reported to be .83, .86, .84, .81, .82, and .89 for professional growth (items 1 to 6), status (items 7 to 12), self-efficacy (items 13 to 18), autonomy (items 19 to 22), and impact (items 23 to 28), decision-making (items 29 to 38), respectively.

#### 4.3.3. *Semi-structured interview*

After collecting the questionnaires, in order to attach more meaning to the quantitative findings and discover what could be revealed from participants' attitudes toward collective efficacy and teacher empowerment, a semi-structured interview was conducted by the second researcher. The questions were based on different subscales on the two questionnaires. The reason behind applying a semi-structured interview was that the researcher could ask the questions based on the subscales of the two questionnaires as a guide, and also had enough freedom to probe for more information. Moreover, as suggested by Dörnyei (2007), a semi-structured interview is appropriate when researchers have sufficient overview of the questions to develop about the topic in advance but does not aim to use ready-made response categories that would restrict the breadth and depth of the respondents' answers.

#### 4.4. *Procedure*

As mentioned earlier, the aim of this study was to explore the relationship between collective efficacy beliefs of EFL teachers and their perception of teacher empowerment. The questionnaires were distributed and filled out by the participants. Both questionnaires were administered to the teachers at the same time. They were distributed in person. It took the researchers about two months to gather all the questionnaires and it was due to difficulties on the part of the researchers to find more novice teachers; the reason behind finding more novice teachers was the importance of the range of teaching experience variable in the study. After analyzing the results, a semi-structured interview was conducted in order to see what could be revealed from the participants' attitudes toward collective efficacy and teacher empowerment. Based on the practical issues, 10 teachers from different branches in Tehran took part in the interview; there were 10 EFL teachers with different years of teaching experience. In order not to miss the details of the responses provided by the participants, their voices were recorded; however, they were informed in advance that their voices and their anonymity would remain confidential. All of the interviewees agreed to be recorded. The longest duration for the interview was about twenty minutes and the shortest was ten minutes. The questions below were utilized as the interview guide based on the subscales of each instrument:

#### 4.4.1. Teacher empowerment questions

- (1) Are you free to make decisions about your own schedule or other important institute's plans?
- (2) Are you given the opportunity for continuous learning and collaborating with other teachers?
- (3) Do you think that you are professional enough in the area you teach?
- (4) Do you believe that you can exert great influence on students to learn?
- (5) Do you have the opportunity to follow your own schedule?
- (6) Are you given (provided with) the opportunity to exert any impact on important decisions at this institute?

#### 4.4.2. Collective efficacy questions

- (1) Do you believe that teachers in this institute are able to motivate all their students to learn meaningfully?
- (2) Do you believe that students here are provided with the opportunities for motivational learning?

### 4.5. Analysis

#### 4.5.1. Quantitative analysis

Through correlational analysis, the relationship between collective efficacy beliefs and teacher empowerment was investigated. While using the *ex post facto* design, the variable of teaching experience was used to measure its effect on collective efficacy beliefs of the EFL teachers and also on their perception of the empowerment.

#### 4.5.2. Qualitative analysis

Finally, after conducting the semi-structured interview, according to the responses provided by the participants based on different sub-scales on the two questionnaires, the data were analyzed through data reduction in order to see what could be revealed from the participants' attitudes toward collective efficacy and teacher empowerment. The process of data reduction refers to selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data in transcriptions or field notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994); "data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that 'final' conclusions can be drawn and verified" (p. 11). As the authors stated, data reduction is only one of the three components of data analysis; data collection, data reduction, data display. The three types of analysis form an interactive process that finally ends in conclusion drawing/verification for the remainder of the study. "The coding of data, for example (data reduction), leads to new ideas on what should go into a matrix (data display). Entering the data requires further data reduction. As the matrix fills up, preliminary conclusions are drawn, but they lead to the decision, for example, to add another column to the matrix to test the conclusion" (p. 12). In this part of the study, therefore, based on the subscales of collective efficacy namely group competence and task analysis, and also the subscales of teacher empowerment including decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview and found similarities and key words provided by the participants on the basis of the aforementioned subscales.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Quantitative findings

In order to answer the first research question, the descriptive statistics and the correlation between the two constructs of teacher collective efficacy and teacher empowerment were calculated, the results of which appear in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics for collective efficacy and teacher empowerment perception**

	<b>M (total score)</b>	<b>M (Likert score)</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>N</b>
Collective efficacy	51.36	4.28	.68	147
Teacher empowerment	120.46	3.17	.46	147

**Table 2. Correlation between collective efficacy and teacher empowerment**

Pearson correlation	.27
Sig. (2-tailed)	.05

Note: Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

In Table 1, the two rows represent the two constructs of teacher collective efficacy and teacher empowerment beliefs. The mean of total score is the sum of all the scores divided by the number of the participants ( $N = 147$ ), while the mean of Likert score refers to the mean of total scores divided by the number of items in each questionnaire (12 in Collective Efficacy and 38 in Teacher Empowerment). Since we were interested in the total mean score (rather than the mean score for each item), it is the former that will be used in reporting the  $t$ -test results (Tables 3 and 4). The mean Likert score has nevertheless been reported above, as it is easier to make sense of when compared with its corresponding Likert scale in each questionnaire.

After analyzing the data we found that there was a significant, though weak relationship between the two variables; as Table 2 shows, as  $r = .27$ , we have a small to moderate effect size here; it means that with the correlation coefficient of  $r = .27$ , the coefficient of determination is .07; therefore, even though the  $r = .27$  is significant at .05, it can only explain 7% of the total variance, which is generally considered to represent low or weak correlations

To examine the effect of teaching experience on collective efficacy beliefs of EFL teachers, the participants were divided into teachers with 0–3 years of teaching experience (less experienced) and those with more than 3 years of experience (more experienced). The descriptive statistics have been provided in the table below (see Table 3).

As Table 3 indicates, the mean of the less experienced teachers was 51.23, and the mean of the more experienced teachers was 51.67. Having applied the independent samples  $t$  tests, it was observed that  $t(145) = -.31$ ,  $p > .05$ , suggesting that there was no significant difference between experienced and inexperienced teachers in terms of their collective efficacy beliefs.

In the next step, the researchers carried out the same procedure to answer the third research question. The only difference was to examine the effect of teaching experience on teacher empowerment perceptions of EFL teachers. The descriptive statistics have been provided in the following table (see Table 4).

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics for collective efficacy beliefs**

	<b>Experience</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t</b>
Collective total	0–3 years	67	51.23	8.93	-.31
	+3 years	80	51.67	7.63	

**Table 4. Descriptive statistics for teacher empowerment perception**

	<b>Experience</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t</b>
Empowerment total	0–3 years	67	120.08	2.16	-.34
	+3 years	80	121.10	1.96	

As we can see in Table 4, the mean of the first group as inexperienced teachers was 120.08, and the mean of the second group as experienced teachers was 121.10. Additionally, having applied the independent samples *t* tests it was observed that  $t(145) = -.34, p > .05$ , suggesting that there was no significant difference between experienced and inexperienced teachers in terms of their collective efficacy beliefs.

### **5.2. Interview findings**

Concerning the first subscale of teacher empowerment namely decision-making, the participants unanimously believed that there was not that much freedom for the teachers to make decisions about major issues and events in the institute, especially about their own methodologies and their own syllabuses; everything is predetermined for the teachers to follow. One of the less-experienced teachers believed that “except some minor parts related to checking activity books, talking with students’ parents about the disciplinary problems of the students, we don’t have opportunity to take part in making important decisions and more importantly, we cannot decide about our own syllabus”

Regarding the second dimension of teacher empowerment namely professional growth, they unanimously believed that except informal talk that sometimes happens among teachers during the break time, and also some workshops that every now and then they take part in, the atmosphere does not let the teachers share their ideas freely with their counterparts; one of the less-experienced male teachers (participant 7) said, “... actually in adult’s department, sometimes we discuss different problems, you know, how we have to teach this particular unit or topic, but not that much.”

The third dimension of teacher empowerment deals with status of the teachers in the institute. Most of the teachers, including experienced and less experienced ones regarded themselves as professional ones; of course, they believed that they were professional enough in some specific areas they mentioned. One of the experienced female teachers (participant 1) believed that, “I guess I am professional enough in teaching English to children ... I get the feedback from my students’ parents, my students and some of my colleagues”.

The fourth subscale is self-efficacy. This dimension deals with how teachers can be influential, and how they can exert great influence on their students. All of the teachers believed that to a large extent it would depend on the teachers and also students.

One of the experienced teachers (participant 3) thought that there was a huge difference between younger learners and the mature ones, “the more mature ones really like to learn, so, we have different types of students and we have different ways of approaching them.”

Autonomy is somehow related to decision-making subscale that is whether the teachers had the opportunity to follow their own schedules or express their ideas about different issues in the institute. All of the teachers believed that they did not have that much freedom; however, it would also depend on the teacher to add some spice to the predetermined methodology. As one of the less-experienced female teachers (participant 8) said, “the syllabus limits my choice, but I think that a teacher should be good enough to teach whatever he/she has in a very good way. It depends on the feedback I get from my students.”

Regarding the last subscale of teacher empowerment that is impact, teachers talked about their opportunity to exert some ideas concerning different important things in the institute.

One of the experienced female teachers (participant 2) believed that while observing the class, she could only help to teachers with their pronunciation, grammar, and some other related issues, but she could not follow her method.

Concerning the first subscale of teacher collective efficacy that is group competence, almost all of the teachers agreed that it would highly depend on the teachers. They could not certainly assert that all of the teachers in the institute were able to motivate the students and did not have difficulty with all types of the students. Neither could they totally agree that all of the teachers were incapable of dealing with the students.

As one of the experienced female teachers (participant 3) said, “sometimes, teachers just work for the income, just because they’re jobless. But teaching is the job full of responsibilities, if you don’t love it you are not going to be a good teacher ...”

The second subscale of the collective efficacy questionnaire is whether the students were provided with those sufficient opportunities to learn in this institute; most of the teachers while expressing their ideas in different ways agreed on the fact that sometimes the institute would provide the students with some facilities and advantages. However, they believed that it would depend on the teachers and the students’.

One of the experienced female teachers (participant 1) said, “all institutes have their own shortcomings, well ... normally in all parts of the institute, we don’t have laboratories that students have to listen to the tape, I mean do some kind of reading ... but if we have a fun class, with the right teacher, with the right class, right book, we can motivate students.”

## 6. Discussion

As it was observed there was a positive, though weak, correlation between the teachers’ collective efficacy beliefs and their perception of teacher empowerment. Therefore, the first research question was answered affirmatively. Concerning the relationship between the two variables namely collective efficacy and teacher empowerment, the results support those of previous studies (Goddard, 2001; Hemric et al., 2010; Hipp, 1997; Martin, Crossland, & Johnson, 2001; Moore & Esselman, 1992), which have shown a positive relationship between the two constructs. More importantly, it supports the rationale behind empowerment of the faculty and its collective efficacy beliefs provided by Bandura (1997), who asserts that empowerment is an important element for both self and collective efficacy; when faculty members want to make a difference with their actions, they need the power to employ those collective actions. Additionally, according to Berry, Daughtrey, and Weider (2010), “both individual and collective teacher leadership self-efficacy have been linked with successful school improvement and reform efforts, by creating a critical mass of empowered experts within the building” (p. 20).

This also sheds lights on the evidence suggested by Goddard et al. (2004); they rightly assert that one approach to strengthen collective efficacy beliefs of faculty members is to empower the staff. Therefore, that is the reason why empowerment is considered to be one of the most important outcomes of collective efficacy beliefs of teachers in their theoretical framework. As teacher empowerment in all domains represents empowerment as an organizational characteristic of schools, it would be related to faculties’ collective responsibility for student learning (Marks & Louis, 1997). Olivier and Hipp (2006) stated that “sharing power and authority with teachers through decision-making and shared leadership increases leadership capacity and builds a belief in school’s collective ability to affect student learning” (p. 517). Also based on Sweetland and Hoy’s (2000) assumptions that teacher empowerment has a significant effect on student achievement, the results of the present study justify the fact that the significant but rather weak relationship between collective efficacy beliefs of EFL teachers and their perceptions of teacher empowerment would be a key factor in educating students.

A worth mentioning point in this regard was the context of this study that justifies the lack of strong relationship between collective efficacy and teacher empowerment. Due to the extensive pre-planned programs imposed on teachers that will be pointed out in this section, the teachers suffer from the lack of being enough empowered and taking a collective responsibility for students’

learning. However, inconsistent with the above-mentioned evidence supporting the relationship between efficacy beliefs of teachers and their perceptions of empowerment, in a study conducted by Henson (2001), he found that although both general and personal efficacy increased from pre to post test on Teacher Research Professional Development, and collaboration was related to general teaching efficacy, there was no relationship between teacher empowerment and efficacy.

The third question was answered negatively as well. This is inconsistent with the findings of the study by Short and Rinehart (1991), who indicated that experience and age were the most powerful indicators of teacher empowerment. The findings did not also support one of the dimensions of empowerment suggested by Dunst (1991) that was enabling experience; when applied in organizations, this aspect promotes responsibility, control, autonomy, and choice.

In the present study the fact that there was no significant difference between experienced and inexperienced teachers with regard to their collective efficacy beliefs could also be justified through their answers to interview questions; based on the answers provided by the teachers and as mentioned earlier in the results section, almost all of the teachers unanimously believed that it would highly depend on the teachers to deal with different students. They did not certainly say that all of the teachers in the institute were able to motivate the students and did not have any problems with all types of the students. Neither did they totally agree that all of the teachers were incapable of dealing with the students. Considering these issues, the researcher observed that none of them mentioned the experience as the main factor to help the students improve. They talked about different factors such as the characteristics of the teachers, and also the motivation of the teachers themselves to teach, but not the experience. Moreover, considering the task analysis, most of the teachers including the experienced and inexperienced ones believed that it would greatly depend on the teachers. They mentioned that although it was the institute that needed to provide the opportunities for both teachers and students to teach and learn meaningfully, it would highly be related to the teachers that how they utilize the facilities to teach in the best way. They did not talk about the experience of the teachers in this regard.

When it comes to teacher empowerment, as mentioned earlier, all of the teachers believed that they did not have that much freedom to make decisions about different steps in their classrooms; the institute did not provide them with the opportunity to have autonomy and everything is pre-planned for them in advance, and finally they could not follow their own syllabuses; none of them mentioned the experience of the teachers with regard to different dimensions. In other words, none of them including experienced and inexperienced ones believed that teaching experience would change the situation for the teachers to have autonomy and freedom to make decisions about multiple events happening in the institute and also in their classrooms. More importantly, there was no difference between the answers provided by the experienced and inexperienced teachers.

Their responses to the interview questions are however inconsistent with the theories behind teacher empowerment and collective efficacy constructs. As Rowan (1990) believes, participation in school decision-making can increase teachers' expertise, commitment, and effectiveness. Moreover, participatory decision-making would also contribute to students' achievement; teachers who are involved in participatory decision-making appear to obtain benefits from the experience, and the most professional ones most likely use the opportunity to improve their instruction and, in turn, student performance (Gamoran, Porter, & Gahng, 1996; Smylie, 1995). This is also inconsistent with empowerment theory which postulates that participation in decision-making may increase one's perception of empowerment and that empowered individuals are most likely to be active in community organizations (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

Ashton and Webb (1986) also found out that status is influenced by the powerlessness that is characteristic of bureaucratic organizations. Teacher certainty about his/her efficacy, professional skills and abilities is strongly correlated to student achievement (Rosenholtz, 1985). To the extent that the teachers do not feel the faculty is able to promote student achievement, we cannot expect

this to support the idea of empowerment accepting teachers' collective responsibility for authentic pedagogy and student learning (Marks & Louis, 1997; Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996).

## 7. Conclusion

Having considered the relationship between teacher collective efficacy and teacher empowerment perceptions of EFL teachers, the researchers found out a significant, though rather weak correlation between the two constructs. At the next steps, having examined the effect of teaching experience on collective efficacy beliefs of EFL teachers, the researchers observed that there was no significant difference between experienced and inexperienced teachers in terms of their collective efficacy beliefs. Having extensive or limited experience did not make any difference for the EFL teachers of this study to enjoy higher levels or suffer from lower degrees of collective efficacy perceptions. Based on the results obtained from the third research question, there was also no significant difference between experienced teachers and inexperienced ones in terms of their perceptions of teacher empowerment. At the last step of the study in order to identify the patterns of the two constructs (collective efficacy, and teacher empowerment), a semi-structured interview was conducted based on several subscales of the two questionnaires.

For the first subscale of teacher empowerment namely decision-making, except being creative in teaching conversation courses, taking responsibility for students' disciplinary problems, and also checking activity books no new information was revealed from their attitudes. Everything was pre-planned, and the teachers did not have that much freedom to make important decisions in their classrooms. About the second subscale that is professional growth, the teachers talked about informal way of discussion among teachers during the break time. The third subscale revealed some new information about the feedback they receive from students and other teachers, and also about specific areas in which they are professional. In other words, status of the teachers would depend on the feedback from their students, and also their colleagues as how they receive respect based on their abilities in teaching. With regard to self-efficacy, the teachers believed that it would highly depend on the students and also teachers' characters. It is not something that would only be related to teachers' sense of efficacy, but also students themselves are important in this regard. Autonomy of the teachers would also depend on the feedback they receive from the students; in other words, it is essential to know whether students are interested in teachers' way of teaching. However, all of them believed that there was not that much freedom for the teachers to have autonomy. The last subscale, namely impact indicated some new information about being helpful to other teachers with their pronunciation, grammar, and also with other related issues in an informal way. However, all of them talked about the idea that there was not that much creativity involved.

About the first subscale of collective efficacy, namely group competence they agreed on the fact that it would highly depend on characteristics of the teachers. The second and the last subscale, task analysis, revealed some details about encouraging the students that would lead them to be highly motivated (top students) to learn. Although it is the institute that is responsible in providing the opportunities and facilities for the students to learn and be motivated, one of the teachers believed that with a right teacher, a right class, and a right book teachers can motivate students.

Like many other studies this study had its own limitations. The first and the main limitation of the study was the lack of willingness on the part of some participants to take part in interviews. If there were more interested teachers to participate in the interview, the researcher could have gained more results over their opinions on the two questionnaires. Second, the research was only conducted in a well-known institute in Tehran; due to some practical issues, the researchers had to confine the setting to only one major institute. Involving other renowned institutes would let the researcher compare the results of one institute with another to get a deeper understanding of different ways to promote the sense of efficacy and teacher empowerment perceptions in various major language schools. Finally, the third important limitation of the study was confining the setting to some of the branches in Tehran. The researchers had serious problems involving other branches of the same institute in different cities.

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## Appendix A

### Teacher collective efficacy questionnaire

Items	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Disagree slightly, more than agree	Agree slightly, more than disagree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
1. Teachers in this institute are able to get through to difficult students	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
2. Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
3. Teachers in this institute really believe every student can learn	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
4. If a student doesn't want to learn teachers here give up	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
5. Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful student learning	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
6. These students come to institute ready to learn	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
7. Home life provides so many advantages the students here are bound to learn	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
8. Students here just aren't motivated to learn	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
9. The opportunities in this community help ensure that these students will learn	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
10. Learning is more difficult at this institute because students are worried about their safety	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
11. Addiction in the community makes learning difficult for students here	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
12. Teachers in this institute do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

## Appendix B

### Teacher empowerment questionnaire

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I function in a professional environment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
2. I am treated as a professional in this institute	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
3. I have the opportunity for professional growth	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
4. I work at an institute where students come first (students are given more priority)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
5. I am given the opportunity for continued learning	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
6. I have the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers in my institute	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
7. I believe that I have earned respect	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
8. I believe that I am very effective	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
9. I have the respect of my colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
10. I have the support and respect of my colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
11. I have a strong knowledge base in the areas in which I teach	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
12. I believe that I am good at what I do	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
13. I believe that I am helping students become independent learners	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
14. I believe that I am empowering students	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
15. I feel that I am involved in an important program for students	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
16. I see students learn	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
17. I believe that I have the opportunity to grow by working daily with students	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
18. I perceive that I am making a difference	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
19. I have control over daily schedules	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
20. I am able to teach as I choose	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
21. I have the freedom to make decisions on what is taught	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
22. I make decisions about curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
23. I believe that I have the ability to get things done	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
24. I participate in staff development	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
25. I believe that I am having an impact	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
26. I am a decision-maker	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
27. I perceive that I have the opportunity to influence others	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
28. I perceive that I have an impact on other teachers and students	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
29. I am given the responsibility to monitor programs	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
30. I make decisions about the implementation of new programs in this institute	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
31. I make decisions about the selection of other teachers for my institute	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
32. I am involved in institute budget decisions	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
33. I am given the opportunity to teach other teachers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
34. I can determine my own schedule	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
35. Managers, other teachers, and institute personnel solicit my advice	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
36. I can plan my own schedule	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
37. My advice is solicited by others	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
38. I have an opportunity to teach other teachers about innovative ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5



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