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SOCIOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

The constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy beliefs and their contributing factors in different ELT educational contexts: A qualitative study

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Abstract: The current study aimed at exploring the most prominent constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy beliefs and their contributing factors in the specific context of English language teaching. To this aim, 30 English language teachers and instructors' perceptions of collective teacher efficacy were inspected through a series of in-depth interviews at different high schools, English language institutes, and universities. Three focused group interviews were also conducted with 15 English language teachers and instructors in those three educational contexts. Data gleaned from interviews were analyzed utilizing thematic content analysis. The common themes that emerged from the qualitative data as the constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy encompassed instructional capability, decision-making capability, the ability to cope with difficult situations, the ability to communicate effectively, the ability to create a positive climate, the ability to collaborate with colleagues, and the ability to keep discipline. Some common themes that emerged as the related contributing factors included job satisfaction, administrative support, and shared leadership.

Subjects: Educational Research; Language & Linguistics; Language Teaching & Learning

Keywords: collective teacher efficacy; English language teacher; collective efficacy beliefs; ELT context

1. Introduction

Considering the significant effect of organizational culture and its influence on participants and group outcomes, numerous studies have focused on major features of educational organizations

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Considering the significant effects of the construct of collective efficacy on the achievement of both the students and the teachers, this study attempted to inspect EFL teachers and instructors' perceptions concerning the elements that constituted collective efficacy and the other contextual factors that affected English language teachers' and instructors' collective efficacy in different educational contexts of school, English language institute, and university, and English language institute. The participants identified instructional capability, decision-making capability, the ability to cope with difficult situations, the ability to communicate effectively, the ability to create a positive climate, the ability to collaborate with colleagues, and the ability to keep discipline as the elements that formed collective teacher efficacy. Furthermore, they acknowledged that receiving administrative support, employing shared leadership, and teachers' job satisfaction were the contributing factors. The results can be a step forward to explore different ways to elevate collective teacher efficacy in ELT educational contexts.

that are assumed to enrich the quality of education (Carpenter, 2015; Goddard, Goddard, Kim, & Miller, 2015; Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011; Nordick, 2017; Prelli, 2016; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017)

One of the prominent organizational features associated with the academic development of students is collective teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1993, 1997). Hattie (2016), a researcher in education who searches for the answers to the important question “what impacts student learning the most,” recently named collective teacher efficacy as the most influential factor.

As an important property of schools, collective teacher efficacy is the product of the dynamic interaction between educators resulting in strong associations with academic performance (Bandura, 1993, 1997). Collective efficacy is regarded as a significant organizational factor due to the fact that social foundations’ strength to some extent relies on their collective ability and their inclination to solve problems (Bandura, 1997).

According to Bandura’s (1977, 1986, 1997) Social Cognitive Theory, collective teacher efficacy is teachers’ beliefs in a school where the efforts of the faculty as a whole positively affect students. It is further believed that the collective belief system of schools can positively or negatively affect their quality of performance. High sense of collective efficacy enables teachers to consider challenging goals and to overcome difficulties. Efficacious teachers would help all students via building positive connections with them (Jahnke, 2010).

In the last two decades, collective teacher efficacy has been increasingly emphasized owing to its paramount importance in teachers’ accomplishment. A great many empirical studies have shown that collective efficacy beliefs within a school organization can lead to greater levels of student and school achievement (Hattie, 2016; Goddard et al., 2015; Holanda Ramos, Silva, Ramos Pontes, Fernandez, & Furtado Nina, 2014; Guerreiro-Casanova, 2013 as cited in Guerreiro-Casanova & Gurgel Azzi, 2015; Hoy, 2012; Eells, 2011; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2003; Goddard, 2001; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). Many researchers have also raised concern about the relationship between collective teacher efficacy and various school individual and contextual factors, such as self-efficacy of teachers, satisfaction at work, confidence in the co-workers, teacher empowerment and leadership, professional learning, and teacher demographic variables (Abdeli Soltan Ahmadi, Eisazadegan, Gholami, Mahmodi, & Amani, 2017; Baleghizadeh & Goldouz, 2016; Cadungog, 2015; Goddard et al., 2015; Henday Al-Mahdi, Mohamed Emam, & Hallinger, 2018, Stephanoul, Georgios, & Doukeridou, 2013; Versland, Erickson, & Ng, 2017; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017; Zabrina-Anyagre, 2016). The results of empirical studies in most cases indicate that there exists a positive relationship between teachers’ collective efficacy beliefs and different school contextual and individual variables.

Considering the fact that teaching is an interpersonal activity in a group context, teacher efficacy may be affected and formed by different contextual variables (Chong, Huan, Klassen, Wong, & Kates, 2010). In this regard, a great many researchers have highlighted that it is essential to consider the contextual specificity of the construct of teacher efficacy (Adams & Forsyth, 2006; Chong et al., 2010; Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010; Lee, Zhang, & Yin, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). That is, since collective teacher efficacy is greatly sensitive to the teaching context and the subject matter that is being taught (Bandura, 1997), teachers may feel more or less efficacious when teaching specific subjects to specific students in particular settings. Thus, it is highly recommended that when making an efficacy judgment, it is essential to consider the teaching task and its context.

In collective teacher efficacy literature, domain-general efficacy studies are common, but smaller proportions of studies have examined domain-specific efficacy, and domain-specific efficacy studies in ELT context are very limited. Besides, most studies concerning collective teacher

efficacy are conducted in elementary, middle, and high school levels, while studies in the educational contexts of university or language institute are scarce. Consequently, exploring collective beliefs of teachers and instructors in various ELT contexts is still needed.

Moreover, because of its tremendous effects on the enrichment of the quality of organizations, commentators point out that there is a need for more studies on the issue especially those with a qualitative nature as a means to shed light on the development and stability of teacher efficacy (e.g., Henson, 2002; Holanda Ramos et al., 2014; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Accordingly, quite a few researches have recently attempted to explore collective efficacy-enhancing factors (Zabrina-Anyagre, 2017), fundamental features of fostering teacher collective efficacy (Nordick, 2017), and how school leaders might promote higher levels of collective teacher efficacy (Prelli, 2016) via qualitative approaches.

Still, few studies have attempted to identify the underlying sources of collective teacher efficacy that is, according to a number of researchers (Goddard et al., 2004; Henson, 2002; Klassen et al., 2011), essential to build a better understanding of how teacher efficacy is formed.

In their systematic review of the body of research on collective teacher efficacy, Holanda Ramos et al. (2014) have also highlighted that there is a shortage of articles on the theme of collective teacher efficacy. From their point of view, “it is imperative to perform more studies analyzing the sources of information in the collective teacher efficacy, expanding the comprehension of the contextual variables that help to constitute these sources and interfere in the tasks of teaching” (p. 186). According to them, it is important to enlarge the studies with qualitative approach because “research that approaches the qualitative nature of data will be able to contribute significantly to the comprehension of data produced by researchers on the theme” (p. 186). In fact, exploring the sources of teacher efficacy provides deeper insights into detecting how teacher efficacy is built and developed (Goddard et al., 2004; Henson, 2002).

The review of the related literature reveals the major accomplishments in the field, and at the same time it discloses other gaps in the literature. Inadequate attention to the sources of collective teacher efficacy that results in insufficient understanding of the construct of collective teacher efficacy is one of the major identified gaps. Also, few domain-specific studies have been conducted on the construct of collective teacher efficacy to date. Domain-specific research grants the opportunity for teachers to offer context-specific judgments about specific teaching behaviors. It comprises multifaceted general teacher efficacy relevant to most teaching situations, along with domain-specific measures that may lack relevance for some groups of teachers (Klassen et al., 2011). In more recent studies, teachers’ confidence to teach specific subject areas, such as science, reading, and math, has been investigated, but inspecting collective teacher efficacy in the specific context of English language teaching has been less emphasized. Few studies have focused on the specificity of the ELT context that is, by nature, different from the context of other academic subjects due to the fact that in ELT contexts both the content and the language of instruction are taught simultaneously (Hawkins, 2004).

Thus, in response to the call for conducting domain-specific studies that depict the influence of “the circumstantial effects of environmental and contextual factors” (Adams & Forsyth, 2006, p. 4) and as an attempt to provide new insights into the construct of collective teacher efficacy via a qualitative approach, the current study has tried to probe into EFL teachers and instructors’ perceptions concerning the constituent elements of and the contributing factors conducive to collective teacher efficacy in different educational contexts of school, university, and English language institute.

To bridge the gaps on the issue, the following research questions are addressed:

RQ 1. What constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy are identified by EFL teachers and instructors?

RQ 2. What are the factors conducive to collective teacher efficacy in the ELT context?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

Following Patton's (2002) recommendation, through purposive and snowball sampling, 17 male and 13 female EFL secondary and high school teachers, university instructors, and institute teachers (10 from each educational context) took part in a series of in-depth interviews. Their teaching experience ranged from four to 20 years. Three focused group interviews were also conducted in the three aforementioned educational contexts. Five school teachers (two males and three females), six institute teachers (two males and four females), and four university instructors (one male and three females) were asked to participate in the focused group interviews to collect their perceptions regarding English language teacher collective efficacy constituent elements and the contributing factors.

2.2. Instrument

Adopting Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory and Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) teacher efficacy model as the theoretical framework of the study, the researchers posed several analytical questions to help guide the process of the semi-structured interviews after an extensive review of the relevant elements in the teacher collective efficacy literature. To verify the interview questions, three experts in the field of collective teacher efficacy, all university faculty members, were asked to review them. Validity was also addressed during piloting the interview. The first researcher discussed the content and relevance of the questions with a school teacher, an institute teacher, and a university instructor. She explained what the interview questions intended to discover, and they communicated if they arrived at the same understanding. Applying their feedback and making the necessary changes, the first researcher was ready to collect the qualitative data.

The interviews were made up of questions concerning the elements that constituted collective teacher efficacy, the characteristics of English language teachers and instructors with high collective efficacy, and the factors that influenced collective teacher efficacy in different educational settings (see the Appendix A). To collect more in-depth information, the researcher provided some additional guiding questions that were based on the elements that were introduced in the related literature as the possible eminent elements, such as the role of the principal, the staff, the colleagues, the students, or the parents, as well as the students' cultural background and proficiency level (see the Appendix A). Guiding open-ended questions keeps the interviewees focused and ensures that the required data are collected (Creswell, 2014)

2.3. Data collection procedures

To capture the unique nature of collective teacher efficacy in the ELT settings, the most prominent constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy as reflected in EFL teachers and instructors' views in educational contexts of school, university, and language institute were designed to be obtained through a series of semi-structured interviews as well as three focused group interviews. The participants were informed about the purpose of the interview and were ensured about the confidentiality of the content of their interview. The interviews started with general open-ended questions, and as the interviews proceeded, more in-depth information were collected by asking some additional guiding open-ended questions regarding some other possible influential factors. All the interviews were conducted in Persian, the first language of both interlocutors. The interviews were conducted within each school, university, or institute building at different times suitable for the participants. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 min, and the focused group interviews took about 60 min. To ensure valid information, all interviews were audio-taped and transcribed afterward by the first researcher.

2.4. Data analysis procedures

Thematic content analysis was used to discern the themes that reflected the constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy and the factors that influenced it. It was conducted through

classification process of coding and identifying themes and patterns. Following Schamber's (2000, p. 739) recommendation who asserts that the criterion for identifying a coding unit can be "a word or group of words that could be coded under one criterion or category" and Kairuz, Crump, and O'brein (2007) who state that "a category is a descriptive level of the content and is therefore an expression of manifest content of the data" (p. 372), the collected data were coded and the emerging themes obtained from related categories were labeled.

To ensure the validity of the qualitative results, several measures were taken. The transcribed interviews were checked more than once, paying special attention to grouping and categorizing them according to their themes. Also, naming and coding processes were guided by the review of the related literature.

Furthermore, an outside reader who was familiar with the construct was asked to code the collected data and to enumerate the categories and major themes. Consensus was acquired through the process of discussing uncertain themes and/or categories. The data were coded as a theme if identified by three or more participants. Finally, two experts in the field of collective teacher efficacy, both faculty members of the university, reviewed and validated the obtained categories and themes.

3. Results

After the process of content analysis of the interviews was completed and the obtained results were compared with the supportive literature, seven major themes concerning the first research question that explored the constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy in the ELT context emerged.

3.1. Instructional capability

The most frequent theme disclosed by EFL teachers and instructors concerned instructional capability. They recognized instructional ability that encompassed the ability to promote creativity in students, to improve their motivation, to recognize their needs, to possess language teaching knowledge and skills, and to use effective teaching strategies and methods as one of the major collective efficacy themes. They affirmed that teachers with such capabilities are assumed to possess a high sense of collective efficacy that enables them to achieve instructionally challenging goals. The following statements from an institute teacher's interview transcript summarize the findings:

I think that for a team of teachers to have a high level of collective efficacy, it is necessary to be equipped with language knowledge and teaching skills and to make use of a variety of teaching methods and strategies. It is also essential to consider students' needs. We can improve the instructional excellence of our institute if we possess such efficacious qualities.

A university instructor also asserted:

Being able to elevate students' creativity and motivation level signifies strong collective efficacy in an educational context.

He further emphasized:

Instructional knowledge and skills as well as effective teaching strategies are significant qualities which characterize a team of English instructors with high collective efficacy beliefs.

Some participants revealed that lack of academic teaching skills and strategies could decrease both students' motivation and their achievement.

One teacher stated:

I used to work at a high school where the two other English teachers did not possess the required skills to teach English effectively. Their students were not motivated enough to learn English or even to attend their English classes. This also affected students' achievement; their English grades were much lower than their other school subjects.

3.2. Ability to collaborate with colleagues

The second theme concerned the ability to collaborate with colleagues. English language practitioners approved that the ability to achieve common instructional goals, to accept colleagues' constructive feedback and opinions, to share successful instructional experiences with them, and to support one another in difficult situations in the educational setting were noticeable elements that constitute an educational team with a strong sense of collective efficacy. Working in an educational setting that is characterized by collaborative atmosphere and shared responsibility improves teachers' and instructors' personal and collective beliefs and tremendously influences their academic accomplishment.

In this respect, one of the high school teachers said:

In our school, we feel that we are members of a coherent team of English teachers who are able to reach common educational goals. We also feel that we are collectively strong when we have the opportunity to benefit from our colleagues' teaching experiences and their constructive opinions. These collaborative and supportive activities, particularly when we confront critical events, enable us to deal effectively with different educational situations. This improves the cooperative ability of our team of teachers.

The following statements from an institute teacher's interview excerpt also articulate the findings:

English teachers in our institute are lucky because they can receive their colleagues' constructive feedback both during class observation sessions and at informal meetings. In fact, they can overcome difficult instructional and other organizational problems in a cooperative manner and this is the quality of a successful institute which performs efficiently.

There were some other teachers and instructors who were not satisfied with the detached professional relationship they had with their colleagues. They stated that the individualistic approach, which some of their colleagues had, impeded collaborative activities.

In this respect, a university instructor commented:

When my colleagues assume a highly individualistic approach, it is very difficult even to imagine that I can share my knowledge and opinion with them or benefit from their experience and ideas. Collaboration is one of the key factors which can make me feel driven to work hard and can help me improve in my profession. I wish I could enjoy a warm cooperative atmosphere in our department and feel positive about my colleagues.

A high school teacher also revealed:

My colleagues work hard but unfortunately they stay aloof from the rest of the teachers. This hinders our improvement. In such an educational setting, there is no chance to work together and increase the quality of students' performance.

3.3. Ability to cope with difficult situations

To be able to cope with difficult situations in educational settings was the other mentioned theme. The participants enumerated the ability to cope with limited or lack of instructional materials and equipment, crowded classes, students with different English ability levels and cultural backgrounds, and other system constraints as essential characteristics of an educational setting with strong collective efficacy beliefs. They emphasized that a high sense of collective efficacy empowers

teachers and instructors to cope with the demanding conditions in their work place and enables them to overcome difficulties.

The following interview extract encapsulates this theme:

As a school teacher, we have to deal with the day-to-day difficult situations of this profession. Such problems as limited resources or lack of instructional equipment are very common in our workplace. Only teachers with strong coping abilities can succeed in achieving instructional goals regardless of such difficult situations as crowded classes with students who are very different with respect to their English ability level or even cultural background. These coping abilities surely characterize teachers who perform capably.

The following statements provided by a university instructor also recapitulate the findings:

Our profession sometimes gets very difficult to cope with when the teachers have to deal with such challenging situations as lack of instructional materials and equipment and students with different proficiency levels or even students who are very difficult to deal with. But I assume that what differentiates an educationally capable team of instructors from other less competent ones is that they are not discouraged when they are challenged by such setbacks, and they have the ability to overcome them effectively. A truly efficient educational organization is the one that the members grow, every time difficulties arise and they can deal with them efficiently.

3.4. Ability to communicate effectively

English language teachers and instructors also reported that the ability to communicate effectively with the administration, the staff, the students, and their parents was another quality of an educational setting with high collective efficacy perceptions. They believed that building effective communication with the staff and the students was the key element that could enrich the quality of an educational organization.

In this regard, a high school teacher admitted:

One of the important qualities of a competent team of teachers is the ability of its members to communicate effectively with the administration and the staff. Establishing and maintaining effective communication with the students and their parents are also equally important. It is through such efficient communication that an educational system becomes competent enough to achieve its educational goals and improves its instructional quality. I think if teachers spend some time learning communication skills, they can enhance their collaborative activities and professional abilities.

The following statements also verify this theme:

English teachers at this institute admit that educational staff relationships and attitudes affect their professional achievement. If promoting effective relationships is among an institute's top priorities, it extremely impacts English teachers' collective efficacy beliefs and institute's instructional quality.

3.5. Decision-making capability

According to the English language practitioners, one of the most eminent themes that characterize a team of teachers with high collective efficacy is decision-making capability. The ability to carry out decisions with respect to such issues as teaching and assessment methods, instructional goals, and the ability to provide input in making other key educational and organizational decisions exemplifies teachers with high collective efficacy. Collective teacher efficacy is enhanced when teachers are bestowed the ability to exert control over instructional and organizational decisions in their work place.

The following comment is provided as support for this theme:

Unfortunately, in our institute teachers do not have any role in making such important instructional decisions as selecting teaching strategies and assessment issues. We just have to follow the strict institute's procedures. In an educational system, if teachers are capable of influencing plans which are designed both for instructional goals and other institute-wide decisions, they can be regarded as an efficient team.

A university instructor also highlighted:

To be regarded as a highly efficacious team, we must be capable of influencing not only instructional decisions and goals but also wider important decisions which are made to run our department and university.

3.6. Ability to create a positive climate

Another frequently mentioned theme was the ability to create a positive climate. EFL teachers emphasized that teachers' capability to create a positive school atmosphere, to provide a safe place for the students, and to improve school environment is what signifies an educational setting with a high level of collective efficacy. Since collective teacher efficacy is significantly related to academic climate and in turn to students' achievement, it is vital for an educational system to struggle to create and maintain an educational climate in which both the teachers and the students feel in peace. In this respect, teachers can play a key role. They can provide an inclusive classroom atmosphere in which the students can feel good about themselves and what they are accomplishing in the class.

In this regard, a school teacher articulated:

...well, I think an educational organization can benefit from a high sense of collective efficacy if it can provide both a safe place for all its members and an academic atmosphere in which students' motivation and learning can be assured. Teachers and the staff should cooperate to arrange for a sound and safe atmosphere for the students. If the educational climate is not so suitable, neither learning nor any other kind of achievement is expected.

The following institute teacher's interview excerpt also recapitulates this theme:

One of the most outstanding qualities of our institute is that it has been able to provide a warm atmosphere in which the teachers and the students feel positive about themselves and their colleagues/classmates. To create such a climate, teachers and the staff should work together to guarantee the achievement of something positive at the institute.

3.7. Ability to keep discipline

The ability to keep discipline was the other important theme that was enumerated by the participants. They stated that it is essential for a competent team of teachers to be able to prevent and control disruptive student behavior. To develop a high sense of collective teacher efficacy, teachers need to have established a set of rules and principles to follow in order to provide a well-ordered, disciplined educational setting in which shared instructional goals can be achieved.

In this regard, a school teacher emphasized:

As a competent teacher, you must have the ability to make use of different strategies and skills to deal with troublesome students' behavior that you confront in class. Also, teachers and the staff must work cooperatively to supervise students' behavior and to direct students to follow disciplinary rules at school. This is possible if a common set of rules is established in the school.

A university instructor also commented:

One of the basic qualities of efficient teaching is to be able to guarantee high instructional quality by exerting control over students' behavior so that the class becomes a suitable learning environment. In a larger scale, all university instructors along with the staff should make an effort to improve the school environment by establishing procedures to deal with disciplinary problems.

The second research question probed into the factors that influenced EFL teachers' and instructors' collective efficacy beliefs. Thematic content analysis resulted in identifying three major themes.

3.8. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction was mentioned as one of the most important factors that could influence collective efficacy perceptions. Teachers and instructors believed that since the educational system is very challenging, especially when high performance is demanded, teachers who are more satisfied with their job have strong perceptions of their professional capabilities, and they can manage to persist when dealing with difficulties. Job satisfaction empowers teachers to deal efficiently with the usual educational difficulties and gives them the positive perception that as a capable team, they have the ability to perform effectively and achieve the designated educational goals.

In this respect, a school teacher disclosed:

In the present educational system, with all its shortcomings, it is difficult to be satisfied with your job and this surely affects the strength of teachers' perceptions of their abilities to perform well as a competent team.

They also remarked that occupational prestige, working condition, and reasonable salary were the different dimensions of job satisfaction.

In this regard, an institute teacher revealed:

When teachers feel that they have the kind of job prestige that they deserve, they will try hard to accomplish the specified teaching goals which are assigned to them, and they are motivated to cooperate so that the ability of the group as a whole is increased. Of course, our salary can also affect our degree of job satisfaction, especially when you have to work long hours but you are not paid enough. This affects teachers' level of effort in achieving the educational goals.

One school teacher sadly said:

When teachers are not paid enough, they are forced to have a second job. This affects the amount of energy and attention they can put into what they do at school. The quality of teaching is definitely decreased when teachers are tired and dissatisfied with their job. This also affects the degree of teacher cooperation. Teachers who are not satisfied are not committed to their job either since their motivation to collaborate with other teachers and to improve their own abilities and the capabilities of the educational organization might be low.

A university instructor also asserted:

Well, I think our working condition can greatly affect our job satisfaction. If we are satisfied with our situation at work, we are motivated to make a greater effort to perform at a higher level and this positively influences what our faculty educationally accomplishes. Also, long working hours sometimes make it impossible for us to perform well. To promote the educational quality of a university, it is imperative to decrease instructors' working hours and to provide an acceptable working condition for them. If the working condition is improved, instructors willingly put a lot of effort into improving their capabilities at work. They will do what it takes to increase the group's effectiveness.

3.9. Administrative support and shared leadership

Participants acknowledged that the two most influential interrelated factors in improving and maintaining high level of collective efficacy beliefs in the educational context of Iran were administrative support and shared leadership. They believed that it was imperative for principals and leaders to establish a supportive, positive, and interactive climate that pursued the unified purpose of enriching student achievement. They maintained that principals and leaders had to exert different policies to empower the faculty members by creating opportunities for teachers to influence instructional decisions, to communicate and share their skills and experiences with other members, and to establish interpersonal relationship with the students and their parents.

Shared leadership enhances an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual trust that results in the elevation of collective teacher efficacy that greatly affects students' achievement. It also brings about the improvement of teachers' relationship with their students.

Participants also set forth that inspiring teachers by recognizing and appreciating their efforts, by providing constructive performance feedback, and by organizing professional development programs could encourage teachers to engage more dynamically in the teaching profession.

In this regard, a high school teacher noted:

I think that if principals believe in shared leadership and allow teachers to take part in the decisions which are made at school, teachers are united with the school administrators to enhance the instructional quality of the school. This empowers teachers to focus on effective teaching because they feel that their opinions are valued. In such a democratic educational system, teachers' confidence is inspired and teachers try their best to achieve educational goals since they feel that they are active members of an educational team with mutual trust and understanding.

An institute teacher also asserted:

I prefer to work in an institute where my sincere attempts are valued and encouraged. If the administration noticed and praised our accomplishments, we would be motivated to work hard to advance our team work. This affects the improvement of the instructional quality of the institute.

According to a university instructor, shared leadership is one of the most important factors that have a direct impact upon organizational and educational achievements. He clearly voiced it by his comment:

Under their expert guidance, we act as a coherent team to enhance the instructional programs of our department. Leaders should have policies to reinforce instructors' collective perceptions by building an inclusive atmosphere in which faculty members are provided with opportunities to make important instructional and organizational decisions.

Participants also commented that the administration can effectively build and promote a collegial workplace in which the members are actively engaged in developing their teaching skills and knowledge by encouraging them to take part in workshops and training sessions to keep updated and by reinforcing their beliefs and confidence in the capability of the members of the group to affect student learning and their academic achievements. In this respect, a university instructor pointed out:

The administration system should encourage and appreciate continuous learning by valuing academic research and by encouraging instructors to take part in seminars and workshops. This can stimulate the positive beliefs regarding the capability and the performance of the faculty members.

4. Discussion

To address the complex nature of collective teacher efficacy that is believed to be greatly sensitive to the teaching context and the subject matter that is being taught (Bandura, 1997), the current study attempted to delve into constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy beliefs and the factors that influence them in different ELT contexts by means of in-depth interviews. Following Creswell (2014) who emphasizes the importance of selecting participants who have experienced the phenomenon being studied, experienced school and institute teachers and university instructors were interviewed. The major themes regarding the constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy identified by the English language teachers and instructors in the current study are supported by the existing literature.

The participants acknowledged that when the ability to exert control over instructional and organizational decisions, which are carried out in their working place, is granted to them, collective teacher efficacy is improved. They introduced various ways through which teachers can influence instructionally relevant school decisions, namely control over curriculum, instructional materials and activities, teaching and assessment methods, professional development programs, and disciplinary policies. These enable them to influence the educational policies and have more voice in instructional and more school-wide decisions. The findings are supported by prior research as Goddard et al. (2004) and Jerald (2007) found that when teachers are provided with the power to influence school decisions concerning the instructional program, the greater their level of collective efficacy would be. In a similar vein, Ross and Gray (2006) admit that collective teacher efficacy is enhanced by providing opportunities for teachers to be involved in school-wide decision making.

The participants further affirmed that instructional capabilities such as implementing effective teaching strategies and methods, promoting creativity in students, improving their motivation, and identifying their needs as well as the ability to collaborate with colleagues to achieve common instructional goals, and to share successful instructional experiences and accept constructive feedback were essential elements that constitute strong collective teacher efficacy perceptions. They commented that an educational setting characterized by collaborative atmosphere and shared responsibility increases collective efficacy beliefs. In such a collaborative educational setting, teachers are able to elevate the instructional quality by sharing their successful teaching experiences with their colleagues and by looking for their constructive feedback and opinions. Such instruction-based social interactions strengthen collective efficacy.

The findings of this study further support prior research as Ross and Gray (2006) remark that to enhance collective efficacy, it is necessary to build instructional knowledge and skills, to provide occasional opportunities for teachers to collaboratively share their skills and experiences, and to create opportunities for actionable feedback on teachers' performance. Pugach and Johnson (2002, p. 6) also emphasize that "in collaborative working environments, teachers have the potential to create the collective capacity for initiating and sustaining ongoing improvement in their professional practice, so each student they serve can receive the highest quality of education possible."

These findings are in line with the other studies conducted more recently in the field. Siciliano (2016) disclosed that knowledge access and peer influence were significantly related to teacher efficacy and that turning to colleagues for advice indicated that they had faith in their abilities. By the same token, Berebitsky and Salloum's study (2017) revealed that there existed a significant relationship between school's collective efficacy level and teachers' instructional practices. They conclude that when more teachers turn to more colleagues for instructional advice, collective efficacy is improved (Berebitsky & Salloum, 2017). They further add that it is vital to facilitate discussion among teachers to raise the perceptions regarding the collective capabilities of a faculty.

In a similar vein, Goddard et al. (2015) maintain that the shared interactions serve as the basis for building collective efficacy. Carpenter (2015) also points out that collaboration among teachers

is a step forward to build collective efficacy and that a collaborative culture is a systematic process characterized by a kind of interdependency among teachers who work together and share their knowledge and experiences. Similarly, Prelli (2016) maintains that a collaborative atmosphere in the work place provides teachers with opportunities to share their teaching experiences and to get feedback from colleagues.

English teachers and instructors further highlighted that the ability to create a positive climate and the ability to keep discipline were the other important elements of collective efficacy. They noted that an educational setting is needed to provide a set of established disciplinary rules and the teachers should be required to have the ability to prevent and control troublesome student behavior. They further emphasized that a competent team was capable of creating and maintaining a positive and inclusive educational climate. These two collective elements are closely related to the ability to collaborate with colleagues and the ability to communicate effectively with the administration, the staff, the students, and their parents since providing a positive academic climate is difficult if a collaborative atmosphere is not dominant in the educational setting and if effective communication is missing.

In this regard, Elmore (2000) argues that the key barrier to successfully and dramatically improve the academic atmosphere and student performance is the fact that too many teachers are isolated and have little opportunity for professional collaboration with colleagues, the principal, or the district. Collective teacher efficacy is built and maintained by providing teachers with opportunities to build instructional knowledge and to collaborate with colleagues, with feedback that is insightful, and with a vision of success in which teachers are treated as sources of expertise. According to Elmore (2000), these opportunities transform schools into organizations with strong collective efficacy and improved student performance.

Similarly, Lee et al. (2011) state that building an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual trust results in the elevation of collective teacher efficacy as well as the improvement of teachers' relationship with students. They remark that when a collaborative atmosphere is dominant in the work place, teachers' chance to share their experiences and to improve the quality of the school increases. Likewise, Rosenholtz (1989) found that school-wide coordination of student behavior and parent involvement in the school were associated with high teacher sense of efficacy. Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette, and Benson (2010) also discovered that interpersonal relations with colleagues, superiors, parents, and students positively affected teachers' perceptions about the group's ability in achieving the designated institutional objectives. Goddard et al. (2004) observed that when the staff members of a school had a high level of collective efficacy, they were confident that they were capable of building a school with a positive atmosphere in which all the students would have the opportunity to learn.

A social, collaborative environment is also closely linked with the ability to cope with difficult situations. English teachers and instructors approved that the ability to cope with the demanding conditions in their work place and the ability to overcome difficulties characterize high sense of collective efficacy. According to them, an efficient educational organization is the one through which the members can deal with problems efficiently and can grow every time difficulties arise since they are a competent team who overcome obstacles in a cooperative manner.

The findings are in line with previous studies as Nordick (2017) and Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai, and Yang (2015) assert that in the face of current increased school accountability, teaching becomes increasingly demanding, and Prelli (2016) found that external threats to efficacy such as an increase in the percent of English language learners in a school or department could threaten the efficacy of the staff if the teachers were not confident that they had the ability and the required strategies to ensure success. They admitted that when teachers face with high levels of pressure in their work, their efficacy beliefs decrease. To overcome the negative influence, they claim that providing opportunities for collaborative sharing of experiences and increasing teachers' chance to observe peers

implementing best practice strategies can reinforce teachers' beliefs regarding their power in confronting the most challenging situations. Collaborative environments inspire staff to work as a unified team and to overcome obstacles. Faculties that built a network of collaboration and exchanges of expertise and guidance tend to build stronger collective efficacy beliefs (Moolenaar, Sleegers, & Daly, 2012).

The influential factors that were found conducive to collective teacher efficacy are also in conformity with the findings of other studies on the issue. The participants indicated that job satisfaction was an influential factor because it could empower teachers to deal efficiently with difficulties and could give them positive collective perceptions. They identified occupational prestige, working condition, and reasonable salary as the different dimensions of job satisfaction.

The strong relationship between job satisfaction and collective teacher efficacy is confirmed by previous studies (Abdeli Soltan Ahmadi et al., 2017; Armour, 2012; Ayan & Kocacik, 2010; Morris, 2010; Stephanoul et al., 2013).

The findings of these studies are congruent with Bandura's (1997) claim that collective efficacy and satisfaction at work are variables that may affect each other reciprocally. For example, Klassen et al. (2010) discovered that improving the collective Korean teacher efficacy necessitated the promotion of their satisfaction at work. They concluded that the investment in developing the level of satisfaction at work could promote collective efficacy that in turn increased the performance of the teacher. On the other hand, Viel-Ruma et al. (2010) explored that collective teacher efficacy influenced the level of satisfaction, and Göker's (2012) study revealed that teachers' collective efficacy predicted job satisfaction in EFL setting.

Administrative support and shared leadership were also identified as the other substantial interrelated factors that affected EFL teachers' and instructors' collective efficacy perceptions. The participants believed that shared leadership was an influential factor as it could provide opportunities to share values and vision in collaborative groups. According to them, educational leaders' structured policies could foster collective beliefs by creating an inclusive atmosphere, an atmosphere in which extensive opportunities are offered for faculty members to communicate and share their skills and experiences with other members and to establish interpersonal relationship with the students and their parents. By engaging and supporting teachers in making important instructional and organizational decisions, by recognizing and appreciating their genuine efforts, and by organizing professional development programs, educational leaders can enhance collective efficacy that in turn can contribute to improved student achievement.

They believed that establishing a supportive, positive, and interactive climate had to receive considerable attention by principals and other educational leaders. An educational system that is based on administrative support and shared leadership attempts to involve teachers in decisions making and social interactions around instruction. This establishes an educational climate in which continuous learning is encouraged because it fosters teachers' positive beliefs in the capability and the professional growth of the educational group.

The relationship between shared leadership and collective efficacy is also advocated by other researchers. Carpenter (2015, p. 691) believes that in order to establish a collaborative culture, "leaders must ensure they provide shared leadership structures." He further adds that shared and supportive leadership substantially affects teachers' engagement in collaborative activities and influences continuous school improvement that results in the achievement of shared values. He found that the absence of shared leadership in school "promoted a toxic culture with the staff, decreased the effectiveness of the collaborative culture...and did not leverage a continuous improvement cycle" (p. 690).

Similarly, Seymour (2017) who studied the relationship between sharing leadership tasks and the development of a collaborative culture and sought to determine the impact of shared leadership roles on the perception of teacher efficacy found that shared leadership had a key role in promoting teachers' efficacy beliefs.

Goddard et al. (2015) also underscore the significant role of principals who support teacher collaboration. Establishing the expectation of dynamic teacher collaboration enables principals to influence collective teacher efficacy beliefs. They approve that teacher collaboration "is the key to the pathway from leadership to collective efficacy beliefs because it is the shared interactions among group members that serve as the building blocks for collective efficacy" (p. 504).

The participants also emphasized that supportive supervision enhanced knowledge by providing constructive performance feedback and encouraged teachers to engage more dynamically in the achievement of the expected outcomes. When teachers perceive that they receive administrative support and that they can affect educational policies and teaching-learning process, collective teacher efficacy improves. It is of paramount importance to fulfil the institutional rules in a democratic way. In a supportive educational setting, high-quality, detailed performance feedback is offered in a manner that develops confidence. This builds an organization with high collective efficacy.

Zabrina-Anyagre (2016) stated that in the school system, supervisors play key roles in the growth of school through promoting effectual functioning of teachers in a collaborated manner. Tsabala (2013 as cited in Zabrina-Anyagre, 2017) found that teachers expected their supervisors to be caring, understanding, and helpful. Teachers further expected their relationship with their supervisors to be collegial rather than authoritarian. Effective supervision has a massive impact on teachers' professional abilities.

Nordick (2017) who searched for fundamental features of fostering teacher collective efficacy revealed that principals who established an environment of openness, supported and facilitated teacher voice, provided opportunities for teacher communication and collaboration, modeled desired behaviors, and promoted continuous learning provided a foundation for school procedures and policies to increase collective efficacy perceptions.

In much the same vein, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) found that collective teacher efficacy was strongly related to supervisory support, and Klassen et al. (2010) concluded that to enhance the collective North American teacher efficacy, it is required to provide administrative support, conditions to control the teaching environment, and the opportunity to influence the educational politics. Similarly, Olivier and Hipp (2006, p. 517) state 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."

Supovitz and Christman (2003) also found that schools that achieved better results had leaders who provided opportunities for "structured, sustained, and supported instructional discussions" and "investigated the relationship between instructional practices and student work" (p. 5). They concluded that when leaders provided frequent, structured opportunities for teachers to focus on instructional practices, teachers translated this new knowledge into more effective teaching. In addition, Supovitz and Christman (2003) assert that school leaders face many challenges, but helping to ensure that teachers have the instructional skills and the professional confidence they need to teach their students effectively is the most important challenge of all. They also emphasize that focusing on building collective efficacy can provide leaders with a means to achieve this goal.

Considering the significant effects of the construct of collective efficacy on the achievement of both the students and the educational organizations, the outcomes of the current research project are expected to provide a deeper understanding of this noticeable construct and make a valuable

contribution to the growing body of research concerning collective teacher efficacy. The results provide detailed information about EFL school and institute teachers as well as university instructors' perceptions concerning what builds and fosters collective efficacy perceptions in the specific ELT context. Thus, the results can contribute significantly to the current interest in discovering different ways that can lead to the improvement of this prominent construct in the educational domain. The results can offer new insight into means by which collective teacher efficacy in ELT educational contexts can be elevated.

5. Conclusion

The study delved into the constituent elements of collective teacher efficacy in different ELT contexts. It was explored that collective teacher efficacy is fortified if teachers were empowered with instructional, decision-making, and coping abilities. The ability to collaborate with colleagues, to communicate effectively, to create a positive climate, and to keep discipline were also found to be significant elements of collective efficacy. The outcomes of the present study reinforce the findings of the existing literature that have called for a reinterpretation of teaching efficacy within specific domains (Holanda Ramos et al., 2014).

Conducting such a type of qualitative study is educationally significant since investigating the sources of teacher efficacy offers insights into the ways teacher efficacy is formed. Such qualitative research sets the stage for the progress of quantitative research through which the sources of teacher efficacy are explored: a development that is critical for theoretical and practical progress of the field (Klassen et al., 2011).

The study also searched for the factors that were conducive to teachers' and instructors' collective efficacy perceptions. The results of the study showed that job satisfaction, administrative support, and shared leadership were identified as the most influential factors in the educational context of Iran.

This study is a step forward to explore different ways to enhance collective teacher efficacy in ELT contexts. Educational leaders who are in search of carrying out effective practices to improve educational institutes are recommended to employ strategies to increase collective efficacy by focusing directly on effective ways to improve teacher job satisfaction. Educational leaders and policymakers can also positively affect teacher collective efficacy by implementing effective leadership styles and by providing for shared, supportive administrative policies.

Finally, the findings imply that principals, district leaders, educators, and policy makers should turn their attention to improving collective teacher efficacy and notice that they are required to make appropriate decisions about the measures that need to be taken in this regard.

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Appendix A. Interview questions

The questions regarding the elements that constitute teachers'/instructors' collective efficacy perceptions:

- (1) How do you define teacher/instructor collective efficacy?
- (2) What are the characteristics of English language teachers/instructors with high collective efficacy beliefs?
- (3) What individual elements constitute teachers'/instructors' collective efficacy?
- (4) What contextual elements constitute teachers'/instructors' collective efficacy?
- (5) Does the principal/the administration/the staff have a role?

(6) What is your idea about the role of colleagues/students/parents?

(7) Can the students' cultural background or their proficiency level play a role?

The questions regarding the factors that affected teachers'/instructors' collective efficacy perceptions:

(1) What individual school/institute/university factors affect teachers'/instructors' collective efficacy beliefs?

(2) In what ways does that individual factor have an influence on teachers'/instructors' collective efficacy perceptions?

(3) What contextual school/institute/university factors influence teachers'/instructors' collective efficacy beliefs?

(4) How can that factor affect teachers'/instructors' collective efficacy beliefs?



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