

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY FOR
TEACHING IN PRIMARY EDUCATION ACCORDING TO
GENDER, YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE, AND
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AT SIX CHURCH-BASED
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN SHAN STATE, MYANMAR**

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Abstract: The purpose of this quantitative, comparative study was to determine if there were significant differences in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management) according to their gender, years of teaching experience and educational background, at six purposively chosen church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar. The study was conducted on 127 teachers teaching at the target schools during the academic year 2020-2021. The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES, short-form, Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) was used to measure the levels of self-efficacy for teaching in primary education, including the three subscales (efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management). A total of 99 out of 127 (77%) teachers completed the questionnaire. After the data collection was done, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and statistical hypothesis testing (multiple analysis of variance, MANOVA) were carried out to address this study's research objectives and hypotheses. The findings from this study revealed no significant differences in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management) according to their gender, years of teaching experience, and educational background.

Keywords: Teachers' Self-Efficacy; Primary Education; Gender; Years of Teaching Experience; Educational Background; Efficacy for Student

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Engagement; Efficacy for Instructional Strategies; Efficacy for Classroom Management; Myanmar

Introduction

Studies on teachers' self-efficacy have been emerging enormously after the influential work of the Research and Development (RAND) Corporation in late 1976 (e.g., Armor et al., 1976; Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011). This enormous increase in research can be attributed to recognizing the relevance of teachers' self-efficacy as an important factor in teacher education, professional development, and students' academic outcomes. A significant number of studies have shown that teachers' self-efficacy plays an influential role in the academic achievements of students (e.g., Ashton & Webb, 1986; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012), learning motivation (Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012), and students' self-efficacy (Anderson et al., 1988). Previous studies also found that teachers' self-efficacy has been linked to teachers' contentment in the profession (Caprara, Barbarnelli, Borgogni & Steca, 2003), career commitment (Makim & Velez, 2015), and better-organized planning and preparation (Allinder, 1994). In contrast, teachers with low levels of self-efficacy encounter more significant challenges in teaching and are more prone to have work pressure (Betoret, 2006) and lower levels of satisfaction in their teaching careers (Klassen et al., 2009).

Many researchers have paid significant attention to measuring teachers' self-efficacy and identifying factors that have overwhelming effects (e.g., age, gender, educational background, teaching experience, teaching grade level, school type). Predominantly because it has a significant impact on both teachers and students (e.g., Cheung, 2008; Htang, 2018; Pigge & Marso, 1993; Shazadi, Khatoon, Aziz, & Hassan, 2011). However, in the literature, there are also many contrasting results regarding factors affecting teachers' self-efficacy, such as teachers' gender (Bilali, 2013; Butucha, 2013; Shazadi et al., 2011), educational background (Shazadi et al., 2011; Shaukat, Vishnumolakala & Bustami, 2019), instructional experience (Cheung, 2008; Pigge & Marso, 1993) and teaching grade levels (Cheung, 2008; Htang, 2018). In the Myanmar teacher education context, there is a lack of published research studies on teachers' self-efficacy (e.g., Htang, 2018; Nyunt & Aung, 2017). In fact, recent studies in Myanmar education have emphasized areas of school administration and students' learning and academic achievement. Therefore, it can be said that the importance of teachers' self-efficacy remains unnoticed and overlooked in the Myanmar teacher education setting, especially in the sector of church-based teacher education. Consequently, the researchers decided to conduct a quantitative and comparative study in order to examine if there were significant differences in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in

primary education according to their gender, years of teaching experience, and educational background at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.

Research Objectives

The following are the research objectives addressed in this study.

1. To determine teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education, according to gender, at six church-based elementary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
 - 1.1 To determine the levels of primary teachers' self-efficacy for student engagement, according to gender, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
 - 1.2 To determine the levels of primary teachers' self-efficacy for instructional strategies, according to gender, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
 - 1.3 To determine the levels of primary teachers' self-efficacy for classroom management, according to gender, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
2. To determine the levels of teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education, according to years of teaching experience, at six church-based elementary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
 - 2.1 To determine the levels of primary teachers' self-efficacy for student engagement, according to years of teaching experience, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
 - 2.2 To determine the levels of primary teachers' self-efficacy for instructional strategies, according to years of teaching experience, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
 - 2.3 To determine the levels of primary teachers' self-efficacy for classroom management, according to years of teaching experience, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
3. To determine the levels of teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in elementary education, according to educational background, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
 - 3.1 To determine the levels of primary teachers' self-efficacy for student engagement, according to educational background, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
 - 3.2 To determine the levels of primary teachers' self-efficacy for instructional strategies, according to educational background, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
 - 3.3 To determine the levels of primary teachers' self-efficacy for classroom management, according to educational background, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.

4. To determine if there is a significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management), according to gender, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
5. To determine if there is a significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management), according to years of teaching experience, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
6. According to educational background, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, to determine if there is a significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management), Myanmar.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the following supporting theories: social cognitive theory and teachers' self-efficacy theory.

Social Cognitive Theory

This theory reflects the notion of human learning by stressing the idea that human learning occurs in a social environment with an active and reciprocal interaction of the environment, person, and behavior (Bandura, 1997). The theory reflects the unique way individuals obtain and keep behaviors while contemplating the social environment in which individuals execute such behaviors. This model is also known as the "triadic reciprocal determinism." Self-efficacy is one of the most important elements in social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in one's capacity to implement necessary behaviors to yield certain desired accomplishments (Bandura, 1997). Four factors influence self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasions, and physiological and emotional cues (Bandura, 1997).

Teachers' Self-Efficacy Theory

This theory is a model based on the theoretical self-efficacy component of Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) described teachers' self-efficacy as their perception of their ability to establish and perform courses of action necessary to complete a particular teaching task in a specific context successfully. In this model, teachers' self-efficacy is determined by a teacher's perception of their teaching capability and beliefs about the task requirements in a certain

teaching setting (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). As the particularized teachers' self-efficacy is treated as task-specific, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) developed the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) to provide a robust measure of teachers' self-efficacy. In the TSES, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about their personal capabilities are explored in regard to three dimensions of teaching: efficacy for student engagement, efficacy for instructional strategies, and efficacy for classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study was to compare teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education, in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management, according to their gender, years of teaching experience, and educational background, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar. The following figure shows the conceptual framework employed to address the purpose of this study.

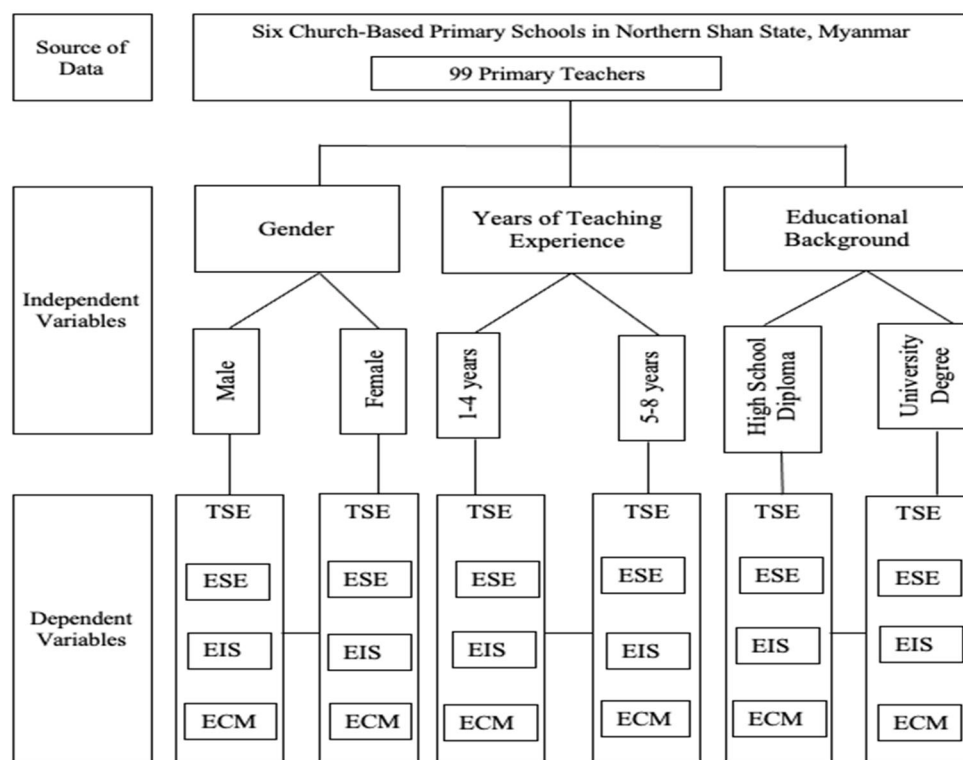


Figure 1. Conceptual framework. TSE = Teachers' Self-Efficacy for Teaching in Primary Education; ESE = Efficacy for Student Engagement; EIS = Efficacy for Instructional Strategies; ECM = Efficacy for Classroom Management.

Literature Review

In this section, some previous studies related to the research variables addressed in this study are reviewed and summarized.

A study by Shazadi et al. (2011) used Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy scale to examine if the factors age, gender, qualification, and teaching experience had effects on teachers' self-efficacy in a stratified random sample of 168 secondary teachers working under the Federal Directorate of Education at Islamabad, Pakistan. The study results revealed that teachers who had a longer period of teaching experience had higher self-efficacy. The study also found that there was a gender-wise significant difference in the self-efficacy of the teachers. There was no significant difference in the teachers' self-efficacy in terms of professional qualification when it comes to the qualification factor. Nonetheless, a significant difference was found in terms of academic qualification.

In a mixed-method study by Cheung (2008), the researcher compared Hong Kong (725) and Shanghai (575) primary teachers' self-efficacy in terms of their age, gender, instructional experience, educational background, and the type of schools in which they were teaching. The study showed that female teachers from both locations had higher self-efficacy than male teachers. Another significant result from the study was that teachers' number of years of instructional experience was related to the teacher's perceived self-efficacy and school efficacy. The qualitative results from the Shanghai teachers demonstrated that they received training from the universities and their daily teaching experience, among other factors, were important contributors to their self-efficacy.

Htang (2018) measured and compared the teachers' self-efficacy of 101 Myanmar in-service teachers in terms of their gender, age, teaching position, teaching experience, and educational qualification using the TSES (short form). The findings of the study indicated that there were significant efficacy differences between high school teachers and university teachers in terms of classroom management. The study also found that professional degree holders (i.e., B.Ed. or M.Ed.) had higher self-efficacy than those holding academic degrees (i.e., M.A. or M.Sc.).

Method/Procedure

In this section, the researchers describe the population, sample, sampling technique, and research instrument used in this study.

Population and Sample

The target population of this research study was 341 teachers who were currently teaching in the academic year of 2020-2021 at 29 church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar. A purposive sample of 127 teachers currently teaching at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar, was taken as the sample group. A total of 99 out of 127 (77%) teachers completed the questionnaire.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using the 12-item short form of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), which consists of three subscales: efficacy for student engagement, efficacy for instructional strategies, and efficacy for classroom management. The 9-point rating scale from the original version of the TSES was reduced to a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*). In addition, the researchers added three close-ended questions to the questionnaire to collect the data on the independent variables: primary teachers' gender, years of teaching experience, and educational background. The TSES was administered in English to the participant teachers in June 2020.

Findings

The collected data were analyzed by a statistical package using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and multiple analyses of variance (MANOVA) in order to address this research's objectives. In this section, the findings from this study are summarized according to the research objectives.

Findings from Research Objective 1

Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained.

- Male teachers had a slightly high level of self-efficacy for teaching in primary education, $M = 3.30$, $S.D. = .85$
- Female teachers had a moderately high level of self-efficacy for teaching in primary education, $M = 3.47$, $S.D. = .84$

Findings from Research Objective 1.1

- Male teachers had a slightly high level of efficacy for student engagement, $M = 3.28$, $SD = .83$
- Female teachers had a moderately high level of efficacy for student engagement, $M = 3.43$, $S.D. = .86$

Findings from Research Objective 1.2

- Male teachers had a slightly high level of efficacy for instructional strategies, $M = 3.20$, $S.D. = .86$
- Female teachers had a moderately high level of efficacy for

instructional strategies, $M = 3.47$, $S.D. = .86$

Findings from Research Objective 1.3

- Male teachers had a slightly high level of efficacy for classroom management, $M = 3.46$, $SD = .85$
- Female teachers had a moderately high level of efficacy for classroom management, $M = 3.52$, $SD = .82$

Findings from Research Objective 2

Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained.

- Teachers with 1-4 years of teaching experience had a slightly high level of self-efficacy for teaching in primary education, $M = 3.32$, $S.D. = .83$
- Teachers with 5-8 years of teaching experience had a moderately high level of self-efficacy for teaching in primary education, $M = 3.55$, $S.D. = .86$

Findings from Research Objective 2.1.

- Teachers with 1-4 years of teaching experience had a slightly high level of efficacy for student engagement, $M = 3.27$, $S.D. = .83$
- Teachers with 5-8 years of teaching experience had a moderately high level of efficacy for student engagement, $M = 3.50$, $S.D. = .87$

Findings from Research Objective 2.2.

- Teachers with 1-4 years of teaching experience had a slightly high level of efficacy for instructional strategies, $M = 3.25$, $S.D. = .73$
- Teachers with 5-8 years of teaching experience had a moderately high level of efficacy for instructional strategies, $M = 3.59$, $S.D. = .80$

Findings from Research Objective 2.3.

- Teachers with 1-4 years of teaching experience had a slightly high level of efficacy for classroom management, $M = 3.46$, $S.D. = .84$
- Teachers with 5-8 years of teaching experience had a moderately high level of efficacy for classroom management, $M = 3.57$, $S.D. = .76$

Findings from Research Objective 3

Regarding this research objective, the following findings were obtained.

- Teachers with high school diplomas had a slightly high level of self-efficacy for teaching in primary education, $M = 3.30$, $S.D. = .83$
- Teachers with university degrees had a moderately high level of self-efficacy for teaching in primary education, $M = 3.48$, $S.D. = .70$

Findings from Research Objective 3.1.

- Teachers with high school diplomas had a slightly high level of efficacy for student engagement, $M = 3.28$, $S.D. = .69$
- Teachers with university degrees had a moderately high level of

efficacy for student engagement, $M = 3.41$, $S.D. = .70$

Findings from Research Objective 3.2.

- Teachers with high school diplomas had a slightly high level of efficacy for instructional strategies, $M = 3.19$, $S.D. = .82$
- Teachers with university degrees had a moderately high level of efficacy for instructional strategies, $M = 3.49$, $S.D. = .88$

Findings from Research Objective 3.3.

- Teachers with high school diplomas had a slightly high level of efficacy for classroom management, $M = 3.43$, $S.D. = .82$.
- Teachers with university degrees had a moderately high level of efficacy for classroom management, $M = 3.54$, $S.D. = .84$.

Findings from Research Objective 4

Regarding Research Objective 4, no significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management) was found, according to gender, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar, $F(3, 95) = 1.55$, $p = .207$.

Findings from Research Objective 5

Regarding Research Objective 5, no significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management) was found, according to years of teaching experience, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar, $F(3, 95) = 2.58$, $p = .058$.

Findings from Research Objective 6

Regarding Research Objective 6, no significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management) was found, according to educational background, at six church-based primary schools in Northern Shan State, Myanmar, $F(3, 95) = 1.82$, $p = .147$.

Discussion

In this section, the findings from the present study are discussed from the researchers' perspective and observation, placing them in context with previous studies. The discussion is presented and organized according to the research variables.

Self-Efficacy for Teaching in Primary Education

Findings from the present study revealed that male teachers had a slightly high level of self-efficacy and female teachers had a moderately high level of self-

efficacy for teaching in primary education. In Kachin society, the teaching profession is often seen as a career that is more suitable for women, especially in primary education. This could be the reason why female teachers expressed a greater level of self-efficacy than their male counterparts since they might feel more comfortable in the profession. The same pattern was observed in self-efficacy for student engagement and instructional strategies, in which male teachers expressed a slightly high level of self-efficacy, whereas female teachers expressed a moderately high level of self-efficacy. Nonetheless, when it comes to classroom management, both male and female teachers expressed a moderately high level of self-efficacy.

The present study also revealed that teachers with 1-4 years of teaching experience had a slightly high level of self-efficacy, and teachers with 5-8 years of teaching experience had a moderately high level of self-efficacy for teaching in primary education. Mastery experience is one of the most powerful sources of developing a teacher's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This is because teachers with a long teaching experience will have more exposure to practical teaching situations than teachers who have less teaching experience. Due to this long experience, they can assess their own teaching abilities, which help develop their self-efficacy. Therefore, it is reasonable that teachers with 5-8 years of teaching experience expressed a moderately high level of self-efficacy, while teachers with 1-4 years of teaching experience expressed only a slightly high level of self-efficacy.

In relation to the teachers' educational background, the study found that teachers with high school diplomas showed a slightly high level of self-efficacy, and teachers with university degrees showed a moderately high level of self-efficacy for teaching in primary education. Not having adequate background knowledge in a specific discipline (e.g., English, Mathematics, or Geography) might be the possible explanation for why teachers with a high school diploma expressed lower self-efficacy. In contrast, having in-depth knowledge in a specific discipline with university-level education could be the reason why teachers with university degrees expressed a moderately high level of self-efficacy.

Difference between Teachers' Self-Efficacy for Teaching in Primary Education According to Gender, Years of Teaching Experience, and Educational Background

Gender.

The present study found no significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement,

instructional strategies, and classroom management) according to gender. This finding contradicts those reported by previous studies (e.g., Cheung, 2008; Shazadi et al., 2011), in which a significant difference was found: female teachers were found to be significantly more efficacious than male teachers. However, this finding was in line with the findings from the studies of Bilali (2013), in which the researcher found no significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy according to their gender. The researchers assumed that the teaching profession is becoming a gender-neutral profession in today's Kachin society. The six church-based schools do not have gender discrimination in recruiting teachers, providing professional development opportunities, payments, and incentives. This might be why it was not found a significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management) according to gender.

Years of Teaching Experience

This study also revealed that there was no significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management) according to years of teaching experience. Hence, this result from the current study contradicts previous studies that suggested that teachers with more years of teaching experience had higher self-efficacy than teachers with fewer years of teaching experience (e.g., Cheung, 2008; Shazadi et al., 2011). Nonetheless, the result from the current study was in line with the results from the studies conducted by DeMesquita and Drake (1994) and Pigge and Marso (1993), in which it was reported that teachers' self-efficacy was not affected by their teaching experience. In this context, the teachers from the six church-based schools must participate in a two-week-long in-service teaching training every year, in which they have opportunities to discuss and share their instructional experiences and learn from one another. Furthermore, the junior teachers are often assigned a senior teacher to teach during their career. Therefore, the researchers believe that the equal opportunities and professional development support for the teachers to learn from their actual experiences could be a reason why no significant difference was found in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management), according to years of teaching experience.

Educational Background

Lastly, according to educational background, the current study also found no significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional

strategies, and classroom management). Therefore, the finding of this study contradicts those of previous studies, which found significant differences in teachers' self-efficacy according to their educational background (e.g., Htang, 2018; Shazadi et al., 2011). Shazadi et al. (2011) also found no significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy who had professional degrees. Cheung's (2008) study also suggested that teachers' received training was essential in developing their self-efficacy beliefs. The teachers from the six church-based schools must take a year-long teacher training program, which equips them with educational and professional foundations: teaching methodologies, lesson planning, assessments, and classroom management. A month-long teaching practicum and specific grade curriculum before teaching in the schools regardless of teachers' previous education obtained. Furthermore, it is mandatory for teachers at the target schools to participate in a two-week-long in-service training every year.

Additionally, teachers have to take a new grade course to change their teaching grades. Therefore, it can be said that all teachers developed their self-efficacy by having a similar teacher preparation. Consequently, the researchers assumed that the similar teacher preparation programs received before teaching in the schools might be an explanation for why there is no significant difference in teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education (in terms of efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management) was found, according to the teachers' educational background.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made for teachers, teacher educators, principals, education administrators, and future researchers as follows.

Recommendations for Teachers

The research findings revealed that the levels of teachers' self-efficacy for teaching in primary education were expressed only as slightly high and moderately high. Therefore, teachers are recommended to participate more in professional development programs that emphasize pedagogical practices, developing student engagement, and managing student behavior to enhance their self-efficacy levels and stay efficacious in the teaching profession.

Recommendations for Teacher Educators

Current in-service teacher training programs provided by the Shan State Kachin Baptist Union, Church/Community-Based Education (SJN-CBE) should incorporate more effective teaching practice opportunities in the

programs for teachers to develop their self-efficacy beliefs through practical experience of applying their teaching abilities. It is also highly suggested to provide short courses on student behavior management to in-service teachers.

Recommendations for Principals and Education Administrators

As for the principals and education administrators, it is recommended to implement in-school continuing professional development programs by providing opportunities for teachers to attend pedagogical seminars or workshops and by inviting pedagogical and instructional educators to the schools in order to enhance the teachers' efficacy beliefs.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

Future researchers are recommended to utilize a larger sample of teachers and add teachers' received professional development programs as research variables based on the findings. It is also highly recommended to translate or modify the TSES to get good reliability for each subscale. Lastly, a qualitative method is also suggested to find a better understanding of how teachers develop their efficacy beliefs regarding their educational background, received teacher preparation, and teaching experience.

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