Perceived Preparedness and Teaching Efficacy: A Mirrored Relationship

Introduction/Need for Research

The primary goal of teacher education programs is to ensure their graduates attain the necessary knowledge to support student learning using the most effective means possible (Myers & Dyer, 2004). Researchers have noted that teachers' perception of their preservice teacher preparation program was significantly related to their sense of efficacy about their teaching effectiveness (Harlin, Roberts, Biers, Mowen, & Edgar, 2007; Roberts, Harlin, & Ricketts, 2006). Teachers who felt better prepared were more likely to believe they could reach all of their students and teach all students to high levels (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). On the other hand, "Those who felt underprepared were significantly more likely to feel uncertain about how to teach some of their students" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002, p. 294). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe the relationship between beginning SBAE teachers' perceived preparedness and their sense of teaching efficacy for instructional strategies.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study was established by McKim and Velez (2017). These researchers operationalized the theoretical foundation of teacher self-efficacy by identifying the presence of mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states within preservice coursework, student teaching, and professional development (McKim & Velez, 2016; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy 1998). Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) defined teacher self-efficacy as "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular task" (p. 233).

Methods

The population for the study (N=126) included secondary agricultural education teachers in [STATE] who had been teaching five years or less, and were licensed through an approved program. Data were collected using the internet survey provider SurveyMonkey®. A response rate of 84% (n=106) was achieved. Nonresponse error was controlled by comparing on-time (N=71) respondents to late (N=35) respondents (Miller & Smith, 1983). No significant differences were found between the two groups. The average participant was 27.1 years old (SD = 5.69). A majority of the teachers held only a bachelor's degree (89%, N = 94) and were female (54%, N = 57).

Teacher self-efficacy was measured using the instructional strategies subscale of the larger Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale-Short Form (TSES-SF) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). Perceptions regarding teacher preparedness were measured using a researcher prepared scale. This scale was developed based upon the National Quality Program Standards for Secondary (Grades 9-12) Agricultural Education established by The National Council for Agricultural Education (2009). It contained six items in Likert-type format and elicited data from the participants regarding how they perceived the preparation to teach that they received from their preservice teacher education program. The scale included five response choices and ranged from 1 "Not At All" to 5 "Very Well".

Findings

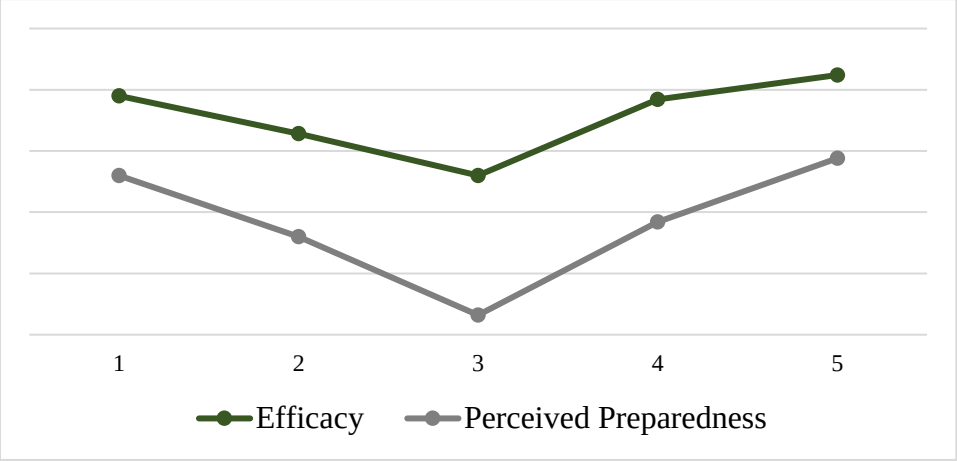
Results of a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation revealed a moderate relationship (r = .41, p<.001) between perceived preparedness and teaching efficacy for instructional strategies (Davis,

1971). Table 1 outlines the teachers' perceived preparedness and efficacy for instructional strategies.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Teacher Preparedness and Efficacy for Instructional Strategies (N=106)

Scale	Measure	1st Year[a]	2nd Year[b]	3rd Year[c]	4th Year[d]	5th Year[e]
Preparedness	*M*	3.65	3.40	3.08	3.46	3.72
	SD	0.78	0.59	0.63	0.87	0.80
Instructional Strategies	*M*	7.16	6.88	6.57	7.13	7.31
	SD	0.78	0.85	0.87	0.89	1.02

Note: [a](*n* = 37); [b](*n* = 16); [c](*n* = 26); [d](*n* = 17); [e](*n* = 20).



Conclusions

The variance in efficacy for instructional strategies does not imply that teachers are not being adequately prepared to teach, but does challenge conventional wisdom regarding the influence of experience on teaching efficacy. Furthermore, the teachers' efficacy toward instructional strategies mirrored their perceptions of preparedness. Why? Did the second and third-year teachers encounter unexpected challenges for which they felt unprepared and were simply pointing to their teacher preparation program as the culprit? Were the fourth and fifth-year teachers more forgiving of their preparation programs? Did these teachers reflect more on the lessons learned during their preparation and draw upon those experiences to more effectively address their concerns? The uniqueness of these phenomena create a foundation for further investigation.

Recommendations

To address the questions and concerns in this study, it is recommended that agricultural education programs continue to focus on preparing teachers to implement effective teaching strategies while providing experiences on which beginning teachers can rely to address future challenges. It is also recommended that beginning teachers be routinely consulted in an attempt to identify unknown gaps in preparation that result these teachers feeling un- or underprepared. Furthermore, it is recommended that feasibility studies of 3-year induction programs be conducted to determine their potential viability as support mechanisms for early career teachers.

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