

## Chapter 16

# Connecting Concepts of Self-Efficacy, Engaged Scholarship, and Civic Responsibility Among Student-Veterans

**Shaneen Dials-Corujo**  
Benedict College, USA

### ABSTRACT

*An estimated 23 million veterans lived in the United States in 2013, when the U.S. spent approximately \$99 billion on veterans' benefits, \$4.4 billion of which funded education and vocational rehabilitation. This denotes increased presence of combat student-veterans in colleges, which signifies a growing need to understand their educational experiences. Research connects high self-efficacy and academic achievement. This study aimed for a deeper understanding of the educational experiences of combat student-veterans who had achieved academic degrees following deployment in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Qualitative methodology was used as a source of in-depth exploration to identify conditions enhancing combat student-veterans' motivation in the college classroom. Using Yin's multiple-case-study research design, information was gathered from nine individual combat student-veteran perspectives. Findings indicated that mastery experience, vicarious experience and social persuasion were major sources of self-efficacy among student-veterans.*

### INTRODUCTION

A report released by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics estimated 23 million veterans lived in the U.S., in 2013, when the U.S. spent approximately \$99 billion on veterans' benefits; \$4.4 billion of which funded education and vocational rehabilitation (Holder, 2014). The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs' (2014) Fiscal Year 2013 Annual Report indicated that 1,143,612 beneficiaries used their educational benefits during FY13, and approximately 754,229 of them specifically received

post-9/11 benefits. The report estimated that the dollar amount of educational benefits they received was \$12,072,603,175.

This data shows that billions of dollars are spent on veteran education each year, and billions more will likely be invested in the upcoming years (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014). With such high numbers of resources allocated to veteran education, it was surprising to discover that 67% of institutions participating in a study conducted through the NASPA & InsideTrack (2013) were not tracking retention or degree completion of student-veterans. To alleviate any barriers to degree completion, both veterans and society in general, must understand how this population transitions from combat to the classroom, as well as how combat student-veterans maneuver through the academic process to achieve degree attainment.

Through this chapter, the researcher will provide an understanding of the importance of self-efficacy in combat student-veteran success in the college environment and the connection to engaged scholarship and civic responsibility. The chapter includes discussions of engaged scholarship as a tool for success in current student-veterans' academic achievement, as well as the effects such collaborations will have on future combat student-veterans. Civic responsibility will be discussed as a means for educators making an impact and serving their communities through their work with the combat student-veteran population.

## **BACKGROUND**

Bandura (2000) asserted that behavioral, cognitive, and environmental factors operate according to a model of triadic reciprocity: they are determinants of one another. Bandura (1986) introduced the concept of self-efficacy as a component of the social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy has been defined as belief in one's ability to achieve a given task (Bandura, 2000). According to Schunk (1995), self-efficacy influences an individual's effort, persistence, and achievement. Understanding sources of self-efficacy is instrumental in comprehending student motivation and classroom performance.

Bandura (2000) identified four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological reaction. The self-efficacy concept may apply to the combat student-veteran population, as it explains why some combat student-veterans are able to complete the academic process and attain degrees while others withdraw from the process.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Service members who participated in an active combat zone during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/ Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) present unique experiences to the academic environment (Holloway, 2009). These experiences include challenges to remain engaged in dialogue between the student-veteran and the faculty, as well as peer-to-peer engagement in the classroom (Kim & Cole, 2013). The combat student-veterans' military and classroom environments, their post-combat behavior, and their personal characteristics tend to either foster or hinder academic achievement (Bandura, 2000; Fajarito, Dela Cruz, & De Guzman, 2017).

The increased combat student-veteran enrollment calls for educators and advisors to gain a thorough understanding of this population's unique needs (Zinger & Cohen, 2010; Barnard-Brak, Bagby, Jones, & Sulak, 2011). This includes awareness that environment extending outside of the classroom, specific

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