

Chapter 66

Stifled Teacher Efficacy: A Threat to Post–Method Pedagogy Implementation

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ABSTRACT

The chapter proposes that the honing of teacher efficacy is a necessary prerequisite for the implementation of post-method pedagogy (PMP). The application of PMP requires an autonomous practitioner who undertakes an experimental approach to teaching English as a second language. Hence, it is justifiable that teachers would need a high self-assurance in their capabilities to make comprehensive judgments regarding their selection, and effectual employment of teaching practices. The chapter examines how teacher agency is negated by three factors – practitioners' operation as passive implementers of dicta, a product-focussed school context that discourages teachers' self-directed instructional approaches, and teachers' overreliance on teaching resources such as the textbook. Finally, the chapter provides PMP criteria for teachers' effective engagement of textbooks which practitioners could competently apply providing they have achieved their efficacies.

INTRODUCTION

The success of the teaching and learning of English as a second language (L2) pivots on teachers' judgments about the philosophies they deem adequate to underlie their instructional techniques. Though teachers' active involvement in decision-making and autonomous implementations of strategies are crucial, such processes may be impeded because there is an “imposing of methodological concerns” that does not invite language teachers to independently realise the most effective ways to teach English (Fat'hi et al., 2015, p.311). This constraint encumbers teachers' development of high efficacies that would result from their investment of increased effort, persistence and production of high levels of performance to achieve students' success. If teachers are not involved in the pedagogical practices geared at honing their effectiveness, the possibility of low teacher-efficacy becoming a threat to the success of L2 instructional

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programmes increases. Bandura (1977) posits that when instructors easily abandon attempts to improve teaching and learning, or do not embark on achieving any desired goals, they cultivate inefficiencies (p.3). Unfortunately, the view that teachers are merely passive technicians, a product-focussed school culture, and teachers' dependence on instructional materials suppress the type of teacher-confidence which Bandura states is critical to practitioners situating themselves as effective instructors.

One contemporary theory for teaching English as a second language that encourages teachers to assuredly engage in critical decision-making processes is the Post-Method Pedagogy (PMP). Ahmadian and Erfan Rad (2014) observe that post-method pedagogy, to a great extent, relies on the teacher for its principles to be implemented (p.593). If teachers do not firmly believe in their facilities to influence learning environments to instigate change (Barnes, 2000, p.2), the benefits to be garnered from implementing PMP will not be received because they may opt to not apply PMP's principles to their teaching. Therefore, it is upon this premise the view is formed that a high teacher efficacy – teachers' belief in their competences and drive to achieve success (Bandura, 1977, p.3), is a vital requisite for the application of PMP which is defined in the background section of the chapter.

Kumaravadivelu (2001) opines that one of the threats to teachers attaining self-assurance is the seeming relationship that exists between theorists and teacher – theorists are responsible for formulating ideas about how to teach, and teachers operate in a “subservient” role as they are expected to execute such thinking (pp. 540-541). Therefore, it is traditionally expected that teachers satisfy their executor role by passively interacting with resources and applying instructional approaches with little to no examination of the theoretical viewpoints that underpin them. If teachers continue to fit into the mould of having theorists autocratically direct their practice, the process of building teacher-assurance and cognition central to the strengthening of their efficiencies would be hindered, thereby creating a barrier for the implementation of PMP principles.

Another detected factor that hinders teachers' certainty in their instructional proficiencies is the general school contexts in which some teachers operate. Bandura (2001) notes that “[p]ersonal agency operates within a broad network of sociostructural influences” (p.14) which greatly impact the extent to which teachers achieve agency. In the context of schools, an element of the “sociostructural influences” is an unconducive school environment that prioritises product in lieu of process. That is, students' academic performance grades are used to mark the success or failure of teaching and learning, and are deemed more important than the pedagogical processes that should be geared at providing students with rich and optimal learning experiences. The preoccupation with quantifiers communicates the message to teachers that a procedural approach to language teaching is not the focus; hence, their core responsibility is to ensure students' results favourably meet the recognized standards. Consequently, teachers sometimes find themselves in the mould of uncritically applying existing theories because they have to “stick to the script ... [and] are held back from an entirely post-method approach since they are expected to help learners to reach at a “fixed set of learning outcome” (Rajabieslami, 2016, p.228). If these academic cultures are preserved, the promotion of teacher agency remains subjugated which in-turn renders a successful accomplishment of PMP less probable.

Since PMP chiefly depends on teachers for its meaningful execution, this chapter will further develop the idea that the honing of teacher efficacy is a necessary precursor to the successful implementation of PMP. Suppressive perspectives of teacher role and identity, and a product-focussed school culture that negate teacher autonomy will be examined in the context of their need for reformation to ultimately allow for a post-method approach to teaching the L2. While teachers may be unable to neither significantly influence change in other people's mindsets about their roles, nor change general school cultures, there

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