

## THE ROLE OF NATIONAL COLLEGES OF EDUCATION (NCOES) IN DEVELOPING SELF-EFFICACY AND PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE AMONG PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

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### Abstract

Self-efficacy, a concept introduced by psychologist Albert Bandura, refers to a teacher's belief in their ability to manage classroom challenges and achieve teaching goals successfully. As teacher education institutions, the National Colleges of Education (NCOEs) play a pivotal role in nurturing future educators' confidence and pedagogical competence. This study investigates how NCOE training programs foster self-efficacy among prospective teachers and develop the instructional competencies necessary for contemporary classrooms. The present study underlined Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. The study aimed to examine how institutional training quality, subject specialization, and gender intersect to shape self-efficacy skills among prospective teachers. The study employed a quantitative approach using stratified sampling to select 230 student teachers (114 male, 116 female) across selected NCOEs. The Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES), adapted and validated for the Sri Lankan context, served as the primary instrument (Cronbach's  $\alpha > 0.70$ ). Descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA used to analyze self-efficacy and perceived pedagogical competence differences. Findings indicate that male student teachers reported marginally higher self-efficacy scores than their female counterparts. Subject specialization also influenced outcomes; history trainees demonstrated greater instructional confidence than those specializing in English, though the difference was not statistically significant ( $p = .634$ ). Notably, institutional disparities emerged, with student teachers from Vavuniya NCOE exhibiting significantly higher self-efficacy ( $p = .000$ ) than peers from NCOE at *Dhargatown*. Pedagogical competence was consistently associated with the quality of practical training, the strength of mentorship, and the coherence of the curriculum. The study underscores the need for NCOEs to enhance their programs through confidence-building modules, gender-responsive mentoring practices, and deeper collaboration with schools for immersive practicum experiences. These insights offer critical implications for policy reform, institutional development, and the broader

landscape of teacher education, especially in contexts seeking to elevate teaching quality through systemic capacity building.

**Keywords:** teacher self-efficacy, pedagogical competence, national colleges of education, pre-service teacher training