

The value of occupational self-efficacy in selection and development

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Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as “belief in one’s ability to perform a task or more specifically to execute a specified behavior successfully“ (Bandura, 1977, p. 79) or as “judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations“ (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). Occupational self-efficacy builds on this definition but is narrower in focus. In contrast to task-specific self-efficacy, however, it “is broader in scope, so that a wider range of people working in different professions can be compared” (Schyns & von Collani, 2002). Thus, occupational self-efficacy can be used to assess “self-efficacy over different jobs, organizations, levels etc.” (Schyns & von Collani, 2002).

Self-efficacy is very relevant in the organizational context as it is related to performance (e.g., Stajkovic & Luthans 1998; Judge & Bono, 2001). The reason for this seems to be that people with a higher sense of self-efficacy persist longer in the face of obstacles and set themselves more challenging goals. So far, occupational self-efficacy has been used as a predictor for work-related variables such as commitment and performance (Rigotti, Schyns & Mohr, 2008), showing the value that occupational self-efficacy can have in organizations. This makes occupational self-efficacy not only relevant for existing staff but also for the selection of staff. But, how does occupational self-efficacy built on in individuals that enter the labor market for the first time? In this study, we want to address the question as to what predicts occupational self-efficacy in individuals with little work experience.

According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy develops through mastery experience, model learning, verbal persuasion and physical arousal. Mastery experience is the strongest of those antecedents (Bandura, 1977). In the case of occupational self-efficacy, therefore, we would expect that work experience is the

strongest predictor of occupational self-efficacy. However, the question of mastery experience as a predictor remains for people who just finished school and are looking for their first job. In this paper, we will explore in how far school grades and general intelligence is related to occupational self-efficacy for apprenticeship candidates.

In the following, we will first address different kinds of self-efficacy, that is, general, specific and task specific self-efficacy and explain the value of occupational self-efficacy in the work context. We will then focus on self-efficacy in training and education contexts, thus underlining the value of self-efficacy in a context of selection of apprentices.

General, specific and task specific self-efficacy

Self-efficacy can be conceptualized as general self-efficacy, an overall feeling of mastery of one's life that influences specific self-efficacy. General self-efficacy is relatively stable. In contrast, task specific self-efficacy refers to the feeling of efficacy regarding one specific task. It is not stable but can be influenced (e.g., by training). In order to assess this type of self-efficacy in the work context, task specific self-efficacy has to be assessed for each different task that an employee is confronted with. It is also not possible to assess employees with different tasks with the same type of task specific self-efficacy, making comparisons between employees very difficult.

In the work context, therefore, different types of self-efficacy assessments have been developed. Examples comprise role breadth self-efficacy (Parker, 1998), work-related self-efficacy (Speier & Frese, 1997) and occupational self-efficacy. Occupational self-efficacy tries to overcome the problem of stability of general self-efficacy and the problem of having to assess different kinds of task specific self-efficacy.

Prior results on occupational self-efficacy. In the study that first established the occupational self-efficacy scale, Schyns & von Collani (2002) reported correlations between occupational self-efficacy and personality (self-esteem and locus of control) as well as work-related variables such as job satisfaction and task demands. More recently, Rigotti, Schyns and Mohr (2008) reported correlations between occupational self-efficacy and job satisfaction, commitment, performance and job insecurity (negative) in different countries. Berings, Poell, Simon and Van Veldhoven (2007) found occupational self-efficacy to be related to several learning styles such as going to information meetings or receiving coaching is related to high self-efficacy and reflecting by oneself. Hugenholtz, Schaafsma, Nieuwenhuijsen & van Dijk (2008) found no effect of a specific training on occupational self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy and performance

Generally, self-efficacy has been found to be positively correlated to performance in general and work-related performance specifically. The reason for this seems to be that people with a higher sense of self-efficacy persist longer in the face of obstacles (Bandura, 1997) and set themselves more challenging goals (Bandura & Wood, 1989). In their meta-analysis, Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) found a positive correlation between self-efficacy and work-related performance. A more recent meta-analysis by Judge and Bono (2001) confirms this result for job performance. Though only very small correlation differences emerged, generalized self-efficacy showed the highest correlation to job performance as compared to self-esteem, internal locus of control and emotional stability. However, a recent study by van den Berg and Feij (2003) found no relationship between work-related self-efficacy and performance.

Several studies have shown that self-efficacy or occupational self-efficacy is related to training success (Mathieu, Martineau & Tannenbaum, 1993; McLaughlin, Moutray & Muldoon, 2007; Tziner, Fisher, Senio & Weisberg, 2007).

Method

In this study, we looked at the role of occupational self-efficacy in the selection and subsequent success of apprentices. Participants were candidates in a selection process for apprenticeships. Standardized instruments were used in this selection process over the course of several years. Data are available on Occupational self-efficacy, Personality (Big Five personality characteristics according to Costa & MacCrae, 1985 - Neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness), School grades in Mathematics, German, Languages, and Overall grade, Intelligence, Performance on the basis of selection/non-selection for the apprenticeship. Data will also be available on grades achieved during the apprenticeship.

Discussion points for the developmental session:

We have got a large set of data available in the context of selection of apprentices. Is this data interesting for an international audience when apprenticeships are a very German approach to learning? How can data be broken down into meaningful chunks for presentation to a wider audience? We also intend to use the instrument in further settings such as experts and management. This leads to the question of how to create a training context for enhancing occupational self-efficacy in an organisational context.

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Erschienen im September 2009 im Programmband im Rahmen der Conference Proceedings der British Academy of Management (15.-17. September 2009) in Brighton.

Table 1: Intercorrelations occupational self-efficacy and personality

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Occupational self-efficacy	2.95	.342					
Neuroticism	1.18	.43	-.58**				
Extraversion	2.82	.38	.37**	-.35**			
Openness	2.36	.42	.27**	-.17**	.20**		
Agreeableness	3.04	.33	.26**	-.22**	.26**	.12**	
Conscientiousness	3.31	.36s	.63**	-.38**	.27**	.17**	.33**

Note: ** p < .01 (2-tailed).

Table 2: Intercorrelations occupational self-efficacy and school grades

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
OSE							
Math grade	2.24	.82	-.10**				
German grade	2.49	.71	-.06*	.24**			
Language grade	2.29	.77	-.07*	.26**	.45*		
Overall grade	2.26	.45	-.13**	.58**	.59**	.55**	

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).