

WHEN MORE IS LESS: THE INVERTED U-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND TEACHER TECHNOLOGICAL SELF-EFFICACY

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Abstract:

This study challenges the prevailing assumption that greater institutional support invariably enhances teacher technological self-efficacy by testing for non-linear relationships in Vietnamese university EFL contexts. Using sequential mixed methods, 245 EFL teachers from eight universities completed the Technology Integration Self-Efficacy Scale, followed by semi-structured interviews with 18 participants. Polynomial regression revealed a significant inverted U-relationship between institutional support and self-efficacy (quadratic term $\beta = -.23$, $p < .01$), with moderate-resource institutions demonstrating highest teacher confidence ($M = 4.15$) compared to both high-resource ($M = 3.76$) and limited-resource contexts ($M = 3.56$). Thematic analysis identified three mechanisms explaining this pattern: support dependency in high-resource settings undermining autonomous confidence, experiential mastery blockage when extensive assistance eliminates productive struggle, and cultural amplification through face-saving dynamics intensifying performance anxiety. These findings are consistent with a boundary condition on self-efficacy theory, indicating that optimal rather than maximal support is associated with stronger confidence development, a pattern that calls resource-maximisation policies in educational technology implementation into question. The study demonstrates that moderate institutional support preserves productive challenges necessary for authentic mastery experiences while avoiding both resource deprivation and dependency-inducing excess.

Keywords: EFL teachers; Institutional support; Inverted U-relationship; Support dependency; Technological self-efficacy.