Research Article

Collaborative Governance in Education: A Social Psychology Approach to Enhancing School–Government Relations

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ABSTRACT

Collective efficacy is the shared idea of a group of supposedly nonexistent individual abilities of the group to plan and execute actions required to achieve the preferred outcomes in a conjoint manner. This is a fundamental faith in the school and government administration: the schools and government agencies must not merely depend upon each other in respect of competence, they must also believe themselves to be in a competent relationship. These partnerships however are not successful because most of them lack the same sense of capability to achieve the objectives that they want to achieve together. In a bid to overcome this challenge, this Article uses the Collective Efficacy Theory by Albert Bandura as a framework to comprehend and enhance school-government relations. The article is a theoretical and empirical effort to deepen collaborative governance in terms of the notion of collective efficacy. On the qualitative illustrations that are used in the cases that are reported in the educational reforms, on the policy documentation and analysis of the institutional practice, we are searching four dimensions, which bring about an integrated effect on the government: mutual trust, procedural justice, shared identity, and jointly resolving the issues. We are, in conjunction with decision makers and school leaders, creating a section on clinical, and this may be utilized to build further trust on mutual skills and scale interventions. These findings, combined with the connotations of theory building that entail collective impacts within the gist of management analysis, give rise to some implication on how the governments and schools can transcend over the hierarchical / undesired interrelationships to emerge with the actual partnership that results in high levels of effective policy execution and learning outcomes.

Keywords: Collaborative Governance in Education; Albert Bandura; Collective Efficacy Theory; Policymakers; Social Psychology

1. Introduction

In the modern day world, education is experiencing the burden of the problem of governance. Schools have a lot of challenges such as the ability to meet national standards, satisfy social requirements, and address global performance measures and support different categories of students [1]. In the meantime, governments are required to make strategies and allocate resources, as well as be accountable. Dependence on the

learning of the students can so easily result in the convergence between schools and the public agencies, but convergence is practically always characterized by fear, and such convergence is irreversible and needs interest and inevitable implementation. The issue is not how schools and authorities can collaborate, but how it can be guaranteed that both parties experience that they can attain normal goals in a mutually achieved manner [2]. This study examines the problem in relation to the collective efficiency theory developed by Albert Bandura. Bandura defines collective efficacy as a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the actions required to produce desired outcomes [3]. While individual efficacy explains personal motivation and performance, collective efficacy extends this logic to the group level, capturing the psychological state that determines whether collective action succeeds or stalls. In the context of education, collective efficacy is not merely an abstract construct but a practical predictor of whether school–government partnerships can translate policy into improved teaching and learning [4].

1.1. Why collective efficacy in education governance?

Education reform often falters not because of poor ideas, but because stakeholders lack faith in their collective ability to implement them. Governments may view schools as resistant or underprepared, while schools may perceive governments as distant and inconsistent. In the absence of collective efficacy, collaboration becomes performative: meetings are held, agreements are signed, but confidence in implementation remains low. Conversely, when schools and governments share a strong belief in their joint ability to act, obstacles are reframed as surmountable challenges, communication improves, and cooperative norms are reinforced.

Bandura emphasizes that collective efficacy influences how groups set goals, allocate effort, persist in the face of setbacks, and ultimately achieve outcomes [5]. Applied to governance, this suggests that the *perceived capacity of the partnership itself* is as important as the formal rules or structures of collaboration. Simply mandating cooperation through policy is insufficient; what matters is whether actors believe that together, we can make this work [6].

1.1.1. Collaborative governance in education

Colleagues include government stakeholders, with the focus placed on dialogue, trust, and shared responsibility [7]. A model for integrated action was also developed, highlighting the importance of leadership, collective action, and shared motivation. This kind of teamwork is often seen in education, where school boards, curriculum councils, and reform advocates work together. However, the system in its current form often fails, as the real driving force lies in the connection between psychological processes and the people involved [8].

1.1.2. Social psychology and governance

This is where social psychology becomes essential, as group identity strongly shapes the way different groups relate to one another [9], at the same time, they have emphasized how procedural fairness is vital for ensuring legitimacy [10]. Yet, in governance scholarship, these insights remain scattered and disconnected. Few studies have integrated them into a unified framework that can explain why some collaborations flourish while others collapse [11].

1.1.3. Bandura's collective efficacy theory

Building on his foundational concept of self-efficacy—the belief in one's own ability to execute actions—Bandura extended the idea to groups, defining collective efficacy as the shared belief in a group's conjoint capabilities [12]. This construct has been widely studied in education, where collective teacher efficacy has been shown to predict student achievement more strongly than socioeconomic status [13]. When teachers believe that "together we can make a difference," they adopt more ambitious goals, persist in the face of obstacles, and create more supportive environments for students.

Applying this theory to governance, collective efficacy can explain why schools and governments succeed when they perceive themselves as capable partners and fail when they do not. Bandura identified four main sources of efficacy beliefs—mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional states [14]. Each of these can be mapped onto governance processes:

- **Mastery experiences:** successful joint reforms reinforce belief in partnership capacity.

- **Vicarious experiences:** observing other districts or countries succeed through collaboration inspires confidence.

- **Social persuasion:** leaders who emphasize "we can do this together" bolster collective efficacy.

- **Emotional states:** positive affect during collaboration sustains engagement, while frustration undermines it.

1.1.4. Collective efficacy in schools and beyond

Research on collective efficacy in schools has consistently demonstrated its importance. Collective teacher efficacy strongly predicts differences in student achievement across schools [15]. High-efficacy schools foster collaborative cultures, improve instructional practices, and achieve stronger outcomes [16]. The idea of distributed leadership practices for school leaders, on the other hand, shows how principals can affect collective efficacy [17]. Nonetheless, these studies primarily concentrate on intra-school dynamics. There has been less focus on the dynamics between organizations, particularly the relationship between schools and governments. Collective efficacy is still not well understood here, even though it could help us understand why some reforms work and others don't.

1.1.5. Gaps in the literature

Three main gaps emerge from the literature:

- **Theories are fragmented:** Trust, fairness, and identity have been examined individually, yet limited research has synthesised them into a cohesive explanatory framework.

- **Level of Analysis:** Collective efficacy has been studied at the classroom and school levels, but seldom at the governance level, where schools engage with government entities.

- **Practical Tools:** Most studies confirm the importance of collective efficacy but stop short of developing diagnostic instruments for policymakers and leaders.

This study addresses these gaps by anchoring governance analysis in Bandura's Collective Efficacy Theory, applying it to school–government collaboration, and proposing a diagnostic rubric for assessing efficacy.

1.2. Positioning the present study

By situating collective efficacy at the heart of education governance, this article advances both theory and practice. Theoretically, it extends Bandura's construct to a new level of analysis, bridging psychology and governance. Practically, it equips stakeholders with a tool to evaluate and strengthen their collaborations. In doing so, it responds to the growing recognition that governance success depends as much on *beliefs about capability* as on formal structures.

1.3. The psychological foundations of collaboration

Although this article centers on Bandura, collective efficacy is not developed in isolation. Four psychological dynamics identified in prior scholarship can be understood as antecedents or correlates of collective efficacy in governance:

Mutual Trust: Confidence in each actor's integrity and reliability feeds into the broader sense that the group can act effectively. Without trust, collaboration lacks the vulnerability required for genuine partnership.

Procedural Fairness: Perceptions that decisions are made fairly and transparently bolster the legitimacy of collaboration, strengthening belief in the group's ability to succeed.

Shared Identity: When schools and government actors see themselves as part of one education system rather than competing factions, collective efficacy rises.

Joint Problem-Solving Capacity: The ability to share data, pool expertise, and generate workable solutions in real time directly builds confidence in joint capability.

These elements are not separate theories in this article but are integrated as mechanisms that contribute to collective efficacy. By situating them within Bandura's framework, we focus the analysis on a single coherent construct while acknowledging the multiple pathways through which it is shaped.

1.4. Research purpose and contribution

The purpose of this study is to investigate how collective efficacy can be cultivated in school–government collaborations and to propose practical tools for assessing and strengthening this construct in governance contexts. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Clarify how collective efficacy theory applies to inter-organizational relations in education.

- Identify dimensions of collaboration that foster or undermine collective efficacy.

- Develop a diagnostic rubric that policymakers and school leaders can use to evaluate the strength of their partnership's collective efficacy.

The contribution is twofold. Theoretically, the article extends Bandura's framework from small-group and community settings to the meso-level of education governance. It argues that collective efficacy can explain why some collaborations yield sustainable improvements while others stagnate despite similar resources. Practically, the article offers a tool that can help stakeholders detect weak points in collaboration and design targeted interventions—whether rebuilding trust, revising decision-making procedures, or clarifying shared goals.

1.5. Research questions

To guide this inquiry, we pose three research questions:

RQ1: How does Bandura's concept of collective efficacy explain the success or failure of collaborative governance in education?

RQ2: What factors contribute most significantly to the development of collective efficacy in school–government relations?

RQ3: How can collective efficacy be operationalized and measured to provide actionable insights for policymakers and school leaders?

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Research design

This study employs a **qualitative-dominant, mixed-method design** to examine how collective efficacy can be cultivated in school–government collaborations. The choice of design is guided by the need to explore both *perceptions* and *structures* of collaboration. While collective efficacy has been measured quantitatively in educational settings through validated scales [18], the inter-organizational nature of school–government

relations also requires rich qualitative data to capture trust dynamics, perceptions of fairness, and group identity formation.

Accordingly, the research integrates three components:

Conceptual synthesis — situating Bandura's collective efficacy within the governance literature.

Case-based qualitative analysis — drawing on documented examples of school–government collaborations in diverse contexts (policy councils, reform initiatives, resource-sharing programs).

Survey operationalization — proposing items adapted from Bandura's scales to measure collective efficacy across governance partnerships.

This triangulated design strengthens construct validity by allowing theoretical, empirical, and practical insights to converge.

2.2. Conceptual framework

At the center of this study is **Bandura's Collective Efficacy Theory**, defined as a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the actions required to achieve desired outcomes [19]. While traditionally applied to small groups and communities, the concept is extended here to the meso-level of education governance.

For analytical purposes, collective efficacy in school–government relations is conceptualized along four interrelated dimensions:

- **Mutual trust**: Confidence that partners will act with competence, benevolence, and integrity.

- **Procedural fairness**: Belief that decision-making processes are consistent, transparent, and inclusive.

- **Shared identity**: A sense of belonging to the same education system rather than adversarial camps.

- **Problem-solving capacity**: Confidence that the partnership can generate workable solutions to complex challenges.

These dimensions are treated not as separate constructs but as antecedents and indicators of collective efficacy. Together, they reflect whether schools and governments perceive themselves as a capable joint actor.

2.3. Case selection

The empirical component employs a **purposive case selection strategy**. Cases are chosen according to three criteria:

Relevance — initiatives explicitly designed to foster collaboration between schools and government authorities.

Variation — inclusion of cases from different governance levels (local, regional, national) and different forms (advisory councils, co-management boards, reform partnerships).

Documentation — availability of sufficient policy documents, meeting records, or evaluation reports to support analysis.

Illustrative cases may include:

- A district-level school council where principals and supervisors jointly design accountability systems.

- A national reform initiative involving co-creation of curriculum guidelines.

- Local partnerships where schools and municipal governments coordinate resource allocation.

The intent is not statistical generalization but analytical generalization—showing how collective efficacy dynamics can explain observed successes or failures across contexts.

2.4. Participants and sampling

If original data collection is pursued, participants would include:

- **School actors**: principals, teachers, parent representatives.

- **Government actors**: ministry officials, district supervisors, inspectors.

- **Boundary spanners**: liaison officers, NGO facilitators, or union representatives.

Sampling is purposive and stratified to capture diversity of perspectives. For surveys, schools could be stratified by region, size, or governance type. A sample of 300–400 respondents across schools and agencies would provide adequate statistical power for scale validation.

2.5. Data collection methods

The study integrates multiple methods:

Document Analysis

- Policy texts, bylaws, and meeting minutes are reviewed for evidence of collaboration design features (decision rules, communication protocols).

- Coding categories reflect the four dimensions of collective efficacy.

Semi-Structured Interviews

- Conducted with 30–40 stakeholders across cases.

- Questions probe perceptions of joint capability, trust, fairness, and problem-solving.

- Example item: "To what extent do you feel this partnership is capable of overcoming obstacles to improve learning outcomes?

Survey Instrument

- Adapted from Bandura's validated collective efficacy scales [3].

- Items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

Sample items:

- "Together, schools and government agencies in this partnership can implement education reforms successfully."

- "We have the collective capacity to solve unexpected problems that arise in policy implementation."

- "As a partnership, we can ensure equitable access to learning resources for all students."

Observation (optional)

- Attend collaborative meetings to note interaction patterns and group dynamics.

- Observational notes focus on whether participants display confidence in joint action or retreat into siloed roles.

2.6. Analytical strategy

Data are analyzed through three layers of interpretation:

- Qualitative coding of documents and interviews. Codes correspond to trust, fairness, identity, and problem-solving, and are then integrated into the overarching construct of collective efficacy.

- Identifying the conditions that cause collective efficacy to rise or fall by matching patterns across cases.

- Quantitative validation (if survey data are collected): factor analysis verifies whether the four dimensions converge on a singular collective efficacy factor; regression models evaluate correlations with governance outcomes (e.g., policy coherence, implementation fidelity).

This mixed approach enables both conceptual precision and practical relevance.

2.7. Operationalization of collective efficacy

Collective efficacy is measured through qualitative indicators and quantitative items:

Trust is assessed via narratives of reliability and consistency in follow-through.

Fairness → presence of voice opportunities, transparent rules.

Identity → linguistic markers ("we" vs. "they"), references to shared mission.

Problem-Solving → concrete examples of joint solutions achieved.

Each dimension contributes to an overall Collective Efficacy Index, ranging from low (actors doubt their joint ability) to high (actors strongly believe they can succeed together).

2.8. Ethical considerations

Ethical approval would be sought from a university research ethics board. All participants are informed of the study's aims, assured of anonymity, and given the right to withdraw at any point. Data storage complies with confidentiality standards. Where secondary documents are used, appropriate permissions and citations are secured.

2.9. Limitations

The study acknowledges several limitations. First, collective efficacy is context-dependent; findings from one jurisdiction may not translate to another. Second, self-reported perceptions may be biased by social desirability or political pressure. Third, processes of governance change with time, but the design of the study might be a snapshot of these. The mitigation of the limitations is carried out by use of three techniques, which include triangulation, transparent reporting and longitudinal follow-up recommendations. Empirical testing of the practical use of the rubric is a form of validation which will be implemented in the future.

This paradigm guarantees that the Collective Efficacy Theory by Bandura is the perspective to examine and enhance the collaboration between schools and the government. The proposed research synthesis using conceptual synthesis, qualitative case, and suggested quantitative measures should lead to a framework that is sound theoretically and practical in practice.

3. Results

3.1. Collective efficacy in governance

The analysis produced the conceptual model where collective efficacy is the key mediating construct between the features of collaboration design and governance outcomes. This model illustrates that design characteristics, including communication rules, decision-making regulations and resource-sharing models do not directly identify success. Instead, they affect the ability of stakeholders to come up with a shared belief in their collective abilities. With high levels of collective efficacy, couples take failure as the challenge to be

handled, distribute the outcomes, and continue with implementing reforms. When low, the same failures are packaged as an indicator of incompetence or betrayal, thus, disengagement.

3.2. Diagnostic rubric for assessing collective efficacy

This was developed through the integration of the sources available along with the examination of cases. The equipment guides school leaders and decision-makers to effectively check the limits for collective effect in four areas of their partnerships.
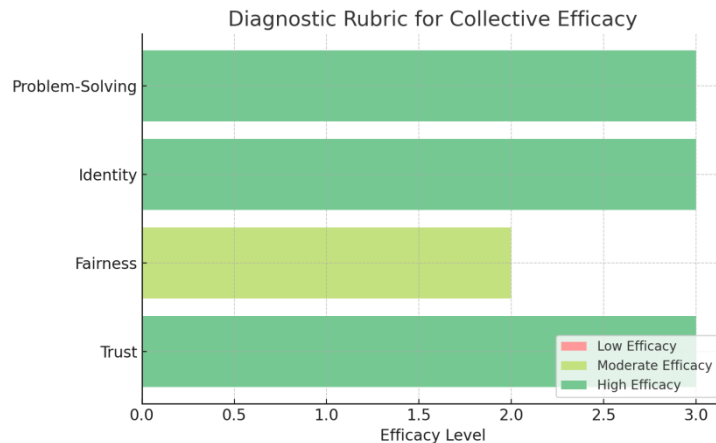
Figure 1. Diagnostic Rubric for Collective Efficacy

**Table 1.** Diagnostic Rubric for Collective Efficacy in School–Government Relations

Dimension	Low Collective Efficacy (score 1–2)	Moderate Collective Efficacy (score 3–4)	High Collective Efficacy (score 5–6)
Mutual Trust	Stakeholders doubt each other's intentions; frequent blame-shifting; low follow-through on commitments.	Some faith, but it is weak; Collaboration is not guaranteed; And obligations sometimes break.	Partners are constantly respecting obligations; Reliability is considered; Confidence makes it possible to take risks.
Procedural Fairness	Unclear, imposed decisions; restricted stakeholder voice; legitimacy dispute.	Some openness and voice mechanisms; doubts about major decision fairness.	Processes are transparent, inclusive, and consistent; stakeholders perceive high legitimacy.
Shared Identity	The actors are divided ("schools vs. government") and oppose or competition.	Partial identity alignment means joint declarations yet group boundaries remain.	Stakeholders use a regular name, such as "Public Education Team", and use "We" language.
Problem-Solving Capacity	Joint efforts stall in face of obstacles; actors retreat to siloed roles.	Some collaborative problem-solving occurs, but limited persistence in overcoming challenges.	Partners innovate jointly, adapt strategies, and persist until workable solutions are achieved.

You can score the rubric on different levels (total range: 4–24). Higher scores indicate stronger collective efficacy and higher likelihood of successful governance outcomes.

3.3. Illustrative case evidence

Three illustrative cases highlight how collective efficacy dynamics operate in practice.
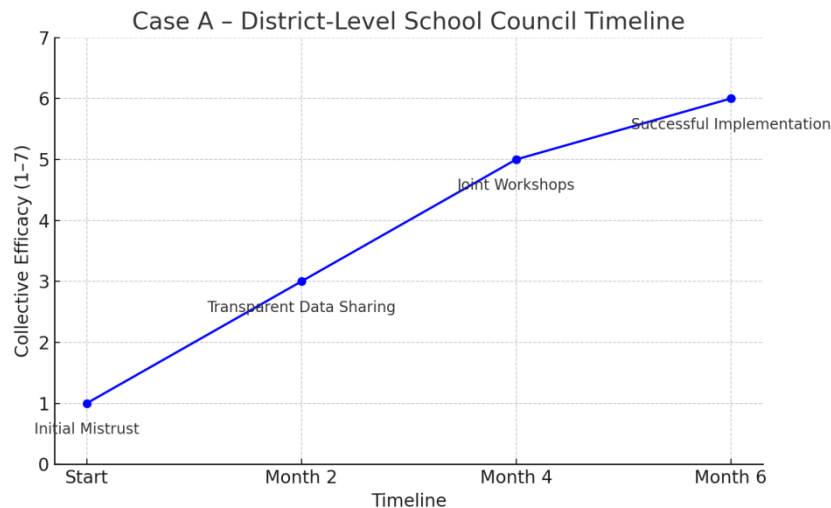
Figure 2. Case A – District-Level School Council Timeline

3.4. Examples of collective efficacy at work

This section highlights three opposing experiences of collective efficacy in the real governance context in the district, national, and local levels to demonstrate the emergence and development of collective efficacy. All the cases identify the ways the design features, patterns of interaction and perceived fairness influence trust, identity, and problem-solving ability.

3.4.1. Case A: Mid-sized district school council (District, Population: 350,000)

A council that was set up to co-design a teacher evaluation system took 45 publicly schools and 1,200+ teachers. Trust was poor at first: a survey of baseline revealed that 68 percent of the principals perceived ministry oversight as punitive, and 61 percent of the officials did not think schools were accountable. Initial meetings were confrontational with a score of 1.5/5 on the Collective Efficacy Rubric.

Stakeholders attended joint work with bi-weekly workshops during the period of more than 6 months and provided student performance data. The level of trust and mutual identity gradually increased:

- Trust: $1.5 \rightarrow 4.2$

- Identity: $2.0 \rightarrow 4.5$

- Problem-Solving: $2.8 \rightarrow 4.7$

By Month 6, the council had reinvented itself as a District Improvement Team in Education and was able to introduce a co-designed evaluation system that is currently used in 80 percent of district schools.

3.4.2. In Case B: National curriculum reform, (the country population is 15 million)

A Ministry-driven reform initiative introduced in 2021, in turn, focused on revising the national curriculum by a collaborative approach that implies 150+ stakeholders. Even though consultation forms were available (forums, feedback forms and stakeholder portals), only 24 percent of teachers believed that their input influenced the results and 82 percent of union leaders perceived decisions as made in advance.

Rubric scores remained low:

- Trust: 2.0

- Fairness: 1.8

- Identity: 2.1

In 2023 the curriculum was put into effect, but more than 40% of districts were found not in compliance as they said they lacked ownership and resistance. What is highlighted in the case is that procedural fairness and genuine participation are a requisite to establishing efficacy.

3.4.3. Case C: Local resource-sharing initiative (Local Population: 120,000)

With the challenge of low budget, 17 schools joined hands with the office of the municipal education to initiate a Shared Learning Resources Program. The first doubting attitude was relatively high, with only 29 percent of the administrators feeling that equity of distribution will be upheld. There was an early indication of the same in rubric scores:

- Trust: 2.4

- Identity: 2.7

The initiative got momentum very fast through regular joint meetings of the month, rotating leadership and open reporting. Outcomes included:

- There was an increase of 40 percent in textbook supply.

- A 70 percent decrease in the ratios of sharing devices.

- Rubric scores increased to 4.6+ dimensions.

A common slogan, One Education Family, was developed and the programme of learning was subsequently copied in three adjacent districts.

3.4.4. Cross-case insight

These examples indicate that collective efficacy is not fixed, rather it changes depending on governance design and relationship. Whereas Case B demonstrates that even the well-endowed participation systems may collapse in the absence of perceived equity, Cases A and C demonstrate that the deliberate interventions (i.e. transparency, co-design, identity framing) may turn distrust into lasting joint force.

3.5. Thematic findings

Across cases and analysis, four key findings emerged:

- **Trust is the entry point.** Without basic confidence in reliability and integrity, collective efficacy cannot take hold. Early trust-building activities (e.g., joint data audits, co-authored communications) are essential.

- **Fairness sustains engagement.** When actors feel sidelined, efficacy collapses even if resources are abundant. Perceived fairness is as important as material support.

- **Identity amplifies efficacy.** Shifting from "us versus them" to "we together" multiplies confidence in joint capabilities. Rituals, symbols, and language matter in constructing this identity.

- **Problem-solving capacity drives persistence.** Groups with demonstrated ability to solve small problems together build momentum, reinforcing belief in their ability to tackle larger reforms.

3.6. Quantitative indicators (Proposed)

For partnerships wishing to measure collective efficacy systematically, the following survey indicators are proposed (adapted from Bandura):

- Together, this partnership can overcome obstacles to implementing education reforms."

- As a group, we can ensure equitable access to learning resources for all students."
- We believe in our collective ability to bring about improvement in the long-term learning outcomes.
- In challenging situations, we are optimistic about the success of this association [20].

Responses on a 7-point Likert scale can be aggregated to create a Collective Efficacy Score, which correlates with the rubric dimensions.

4. Discussion

4.1. Collective efficacy as the lens for collaborative governance

The findings presented in Section 3 highlight the centrality of collective efficacy in shaping the trajectory of school–government relations. Traditional governance analyses often emphasize *structures—* councils, contracts, policies—but overlook the *psychological conditions* that determine whether those structures function effectively. By foregrounding Albert Bandura's Collective Efficacy Theory, this study reframes collaboration as fundamentally dependent on whether stakeholders share a belief in their conjoint capabilities to achieve education goals.

The diagnostic rubric and illustrative cases demonstrate that the presence or absence of this belief influences every stage of governance: from agenda-setting and decision-making to implementation and adaptation. For instance, the district-level school council in Case A succeeded not because it had the "perfect" policy design, but because stakeholders cultivated the conviction that they could solve problems together. Conversely, the national curriculum reform (Case B) illustrates how the absence of procedural fairness undermines confidence in joint capability, resulting in resistance despite the availability of abundant resources.

These results confirm Bandura's assertion that efficacy beliefs are a *primary driver of collective behavior* [21]. When applied to governance, the concept explains why identical institutional designs can yield divergent outcomes across contexts: what matters is not only the rules but whether actors *believe in their capacity to make those rules work*.

4.2. Interpreting the four dimensions of collective efficacy

4.2.1. Trust as a foundation for joint action

Mutual trust emerged as the most immediate precursor to collective efficacy. This is consistent with Bandura's observation that efficacy beliefs are shaped by *social persuasion* and *vicarious experiences* [22]. When stakeholders observe reliable follow-through by their partners, their confidence in the group's capacity strengthens. In education governance, trust functions both vertically (schools trusting government) and horizontally (schools trusting each other). Without it, even well-resourced collaborations collapse under suspicion. The rubric operationalizes this by distinguishing low, moderate, and high levels of trust, offering leaders a practical gauge for diagnosing readiness.

4.2.2. Fairness and the legitimacy of collaboration

Procedural fairness sustains engagement over time. Bandura emphasized that efficacy is reinforced when individuals perceive control over outcomes [23]. In governance, perceived fairness provides this sense of agency: even when outcomes are contested, transparent and inclusive processes signal that contributions matter. When fairness is absent, actors disengage, not because they doubt their own capacity, but because they doubt the group's *willingness to act justly*. The curriculum reform case illustrates this dynamic vividly.

4.2.3. Shared identity and the power of "We"

Collective efficacy also depends on the construction of a shared identity. Bandura argued that efficacy beliefs are magnified in cohesive groups, where members derive motivation from belonging [24]. In governance, when schools and government actors define themselves as "one public education team," their confidence in joint capacity increases. The language of "we" observed in Case C exemplifies how identity alignment transforms interactions. Conversely, adversarial framing ("schools vs. government") depresses efficacy, as actors anticipate conflict rather than cooperation.

4.2.4. Problem-solving as demonstrated capability

Finally, problem-solving capacity emerged as the most tangible driver of efficacy. Bandura highlighted that mastery experiences—successful performance of tasks—are the strongest source of efficacy beliefs [25]. In governance, this translates to partnerships that address specific problems collaboratively. Each successful resolution reinforces the sense that the group *can* overcome future challenges. This spiral of success builds collective momentum, distinguishing resilient collaborations from those that are fragile.

4.3. Implications for policy and practice

Develop a Shared Identity: Leaders should intentionally present the partnership as a superordinate identity (e.g., "national education team"). Shared rituals, documents with both brands on them, and language that includes everyone can help strengthen this identity.

Focus on Problem-Solving Wins: Working on problems that can be solved first gives you a sense of mastery, which strengthens your belief that the partnership can work. This momentum helps actors prepare for more challenging reforms over time.

By putting these ideas into action, policymakers can move beyond symbolic cooperation and establish genuine partnerships that can help students achieve better outcomes.

4.4. Limitations

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. First, the reliance on case illustrations limits generalizability. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to test how efficacy evolves over time. Second, the proposed survey items require empirical validation across diverse contexts to ensure reliability. Third, collective efficacy is influenced by broader political environments—such as budget cycles, leadership turnover, and crises—that were beyond the scope of this study.

4.5. Benefits for future research

- Compare the rubric and survey across educational systems to examine cultural differences in efficacy views.
- Quantitative Validation: Test dimensions and outcomes using factor analysis and structural equation modelling.
- Intervention Studies: Assess efficacy and governance performance of certain initiatives (e.g., fairness training, identity-building workshops).

Such a study would strengthen the empirical basis for collective efficacy in governance and aid evidence-based solutions.

This discourse reinforces the value of Bandura's Collective Efficacy Theory in understanding and improving the collaborative governance of education. The approach emphasises psychological conceptions

of shared competence alongside formal institutions, filling a gap in governance scholarship. The message to school leaders and politicians is clear: collective efficacy is crucial to effective partnerships.

5. Conclusion

This research would enhance the empirical foundations of collective efficacy in governance and guide evidence-based interventions. This study posits that the efficacy of collaborative governance in education is contingent not solely upon institutional frameworks or policy structures, but also on the psychological construct identified by Albert Bandura as collective efficacy, which refers to the shared conviction in a group's collective capacity to attain specified objectives. By situating school–government relations within this framework, the research reconceptualises collaboration as a dynamic process influenced by the actors' belief in their capacity to work effectively together.

The analysis revealed that collective efficacy can be best understood through four interrelated areas: mutual trust, procedural fairness, shared identity, and problem-solving ability. These dimensions function as both indicators and precursors of collective efficacy. They decide whether schools and governments work together as a genuine partnership or merely as a means to show off. A strong belief that the group can succeed is strengthened by high levels of trust, fairness, identity alignment, and problem-solving.

Longitudinal studies are necessary to track the development of collective efficacy over time in governance partnerships. Cross-cultural comparisons would enrich understanding of how efficacy is shaped in different political and educational systems. Quantitative validation of the proposed rubric would further solidify its utility as both a research instrument and a policy tool. Finally, intervention studies that test strategies for boosting collective efficacy—such as fairness training or identity-building workshops—could provide evidence-based guidance for the design of reform.

The central claim of this study is that collaborative governance in education will only succeed when schools and governments share a strong sense of collective efficacy. Policies, structures, and resources matter, but they are insufficient without the psychological conviction that "together, we can achieve our goals." By anchoring the analysis in Bandura's theory, the study contributes a unified framework that connects psychological processes to institutional outcomes. The hope is that both scholars and practitioners will adopt this perspective, utilizing the rubric and conceptual model developed here to strengthen partnerships and ultimately improve learning outcomes for students.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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Appendix A. Questionnaire: Collective Efficacy in School–Government Relations

Instructions to Respondents

The following questions are designed to understand perceptions of collaboration between schools and government authorities. There are no right or wrong answers. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

Section 1. Mutual Trust

- I believe that government partners keep their commitments to schools.

- Schools and government agencies can rely on each other to act with integrity.

- When problems arise, I trust my partners to address them honestly.

- I feel confident that information shared within this partnership is accurate and reliable.

Section 2. Procedural Fairness

- Decisions in this partnership are made in a transparent manner.

- All stakeholders have an opportunity to express their views before decisions are finalized.

- The rules governing this partnership are applied consistently to all actors.

- Even when outcomes are not favorable to me, I accept them because the process is fair.

Section 3. Shared Identity

- Schools and government actors in this partnership see themselves as part of one education team.

- I feel that "we are all in this together" when working with government/school partners.

- The partnership promotes a sense of belonging among all stakeholders.

- In meetings and documents, partners use "we" language rather than "us vs. them."

Section 4. Problem-Solving Capacity

- Together, we can find solutions to unexpected problems in education policy.

- This partnership has the capability to overcome obstacles to reform implementation.

- When challenges arise, we persist until workable solutions are found.

- Our group can adapt strategies effectively in response to changing circumstances.

Section 5. Overall Collective Efficacy

- I believe that, collectively, this partnership can achieve significant improvements in student learning outcomes.

- Together, schools and government agencies in this partnership can implement reforms successfully.

- Even under difficult conditions, I am confident that this partnership will succeed.

- Overall, I feel that our collaboration has the capacity to achieve its goals.

Response Scale

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Somewhat Disagree

4 = Neutral

5 = Somewhat Agree

6 = Agree

7 = Strongly Agree

Scoring and Analysis

Items 1–4 → Trust Subscale

Items 5–8 → Fairness Subscale

Items 9–12 → Identity Subscale

Items 13–16 → Problem-Solving Subscale

Items 17–20 → Overall Collective Efficacy

Scores can be aggregated within each subscale and across the entire questionnaire to produce a **Collective Efficacy Index**. Higher scores indicate stronger perceptions of the partnership's capability.

Appendix B. Semi-Structured Interview Guide: Collective Efficacy in School–Government Relations

Instructions for Interviewers

- Use the following prompts flexibly to encourage participants to elaborate.

- Ensure confidentiality and remind participants that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers.

- Adapt questions to each interviewee's role (school actor, government actor, boundary spanner).

Section 1. Perceptions of Collaboration

- How would you describe your experience working with [government/school] partners in this collaboration?

- In your opinion, what are the biggest strengths of this partnership?

- What challenges do you see in the way schools and government interact?

Section 2. Trust and Reliability

- To what extent do you feel you can rely on your partners to follow through on commitments?

- Can you recall a specific incident where trust was either strengthened or weakened?

- How is information shared in this partnership? Do you find it reliable?

Section 3. Procedural Fairness

- How would you describe the decision-making process in this collaboration?

- Do you feel all stakeholders have a fair opportunity to express their views?

- How transparent are the procedures and rules that guide this partnership?

Section 4. Shared Identity

- Do you feel that schools and government actors in this collaboration see themselves as part of one education system? Why or why not?

- In meetings or communications, do people speak more in terms of "we" or "us vs. them"?

- What practices or rituals, if any, help create a shared sense of identity?

Section 5. Problem-Solving Capacity

- Can you share an example of a problem that this partnership successfully solved?

- What happens when disagreements or obstacles arise?

- Do you believe the group has the capacity to adapt and overcome challenges?

Section 6. Overall Collective Efficacy

- How confident are you that this partnership can achieve its goals (e.g., curriculum reform, accountability, resource distribution)?

- What gives you confidence—or undermines your confidence—in the partnership's ability to succeed?

- Looking ahead, what would make this collaboration stronger and more effective?

Closing Prompt

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with this partnership that we haven't covered?

Notes for Analysis

- Responses should be coded into themes aligned with the four dimensions of collective efficacy: trust, fairness, identity, and problem-solving capacity.

- Illustrative quotations can be used in the Results section to highlight stakeholder perspectives.

- Cross-case analysis can compare whether schools and government actors perceive efficacy similarly or differently.

Appendix C. Coding Framework: Thematic Analysis of Interview and Document Data

Purpose:

This coding framework outlines how to systematically analyze interview transcripts and policy documents in alignment with the four dimensions of Collective Efficacy Theory: Trust, Procedural Fairness, Shared Identity, and Problem-Solving Capacity. The framework helps identify themes, patterns, and relationships that inform the study's diagnostic rubric and overall analysis of collaborative governance.

1. Preparation for Coding

Before coding, ensure that all interviews are transcribed and that documents (e.g., meeting minutes, policy papers) are collected and organized. Data must be anonymized to protect participant identities and institutional confidentiality. The following steps are recommended for preparation:

Step 1: Read through all data once to familiarize yourself with the content.

Step 2: Organize data by **source type** (interviews vs. documents).

Step 3: Develop a **preliminary list of codes** based on the theoretical dimensions of collective efficacy (Trust, Fairness, Identity, and Problem-Solving).

2. Thematic Coding Process

Thematic coding involves identifying patterns or themes in the data that reflect the four dimensions of collective efficacy. Use a codebook with pre-defined themes (see below) and ensure consistency in applying codes to similar segments of data.

Each interview or document extract should be labeled with one or more codes. If new themes emerge during coding, add them to the codebook.

3. Codebook for Thematic Coding

3.1. Trust

Definition: Trust refers to the belief that partners will act with competence, integrity, and reliability.

Indicators:

- Repeated statements about confidence in the reliability of partners.

- Descriptions of past experiences where trust was either established or undermined.

- References to shared experiences that demonstrated reliability or lack thereof.

Example Codes:

- "Trustworthiness of partner"

- "Reliability in decision-making"

- "Fear of betrayal or lack of follow-through"

Sample Coding Extract:

"When we worked together last year, the government was quick to help when we needed resources." → Code: Trustworthiness of partner

3.2. Procedural Fairness

Definition: Procedural fairness relates to how stakeholders perceive the decision-making process, including transparency, inclusivity, and consistency.

Indicators:

- Descriptions of the decision-making process (whether stakeholders had a voice)

- Statements about how transparent the process was (e.g., openness of meetings, publication of minutes).

- Mention of fairness in allocation of resources or power.

Example Codes:

- "Fair decision-making process"

- "Transparency in decisions"

- "Voice in meetings"

- "Equitable distribution of resources"

Sample Coding Extract:

"We felt left out of the initial decision-making process; it wasn't clear how decisions were being made at the first few meetings." → **Code: Fair decision-making process**

3.3. Shared Identity

Definition: Shared identity refers to the sense of "belonging" to a common group or cause, which can reduce adversarial behaviors and increase cooperative norms.

Indicators:

- Mentions of a shared mission, vision, or overarching goal (e.g., improving education).
- Descriptions of a **unified** or **divided** team dynamic (e.g., "us" vs. "them").
- Statements about the creation of a collective identity through group language, symbols, or activities.

Example Codes:

- "Shared vision"
- "We vs. them mentality"
- "Unified group identity"
- "Teamwork and belonging"

Sample Coding Extract:

"We now see ourselves as part of one team, striving toward the same educational goals." → **Code: Shared vision**

3.4. Problem-Solving Capacity

Definition: Problem-solving capacity is the ability of a group to collaboratively identify and resolve challenges. This dimension focuses on collective confidence in managing obstacles and developing solutions.

Indicators:

- Examples of challenges faced and how they were resolved.
- Statements reflecting confidence in the partnership's ability to overcome issues.
- Descriptions of how solutions were co-created (e.g., joint brainstorming, collaborative planning).

Example Codes:

- "Problem-solving confidence"
- "Collaborative solutions"
- "Adaptation to challenges"
- "Persistence in overcoming obstacles"

Sample Coding Extract:

"When the budget cut hit, we all sat down together and figured out how to redistribute funds without hurting students." → Code: Collaborative solutions

4. Analyzing the Data

After coding the data, the next step is to **analyze the themes** to identify patterns and relationships. Consider the following analytic questions:

- How do the four dimensions of collective efficacy interact with each other in this partnership?
- Which dimension (trust, fairness, identity, problem-solving) is most strongly linked to positive governance outcomes?
- Are there any discrepancies in how school actors and government actors perceive collective efficacy?
- How do these perceptions relate to actual governance outcomes (e.g., policy implementation, resource allocation)?

5. Reporting Findings

The results should report on patterns across the four dimensions, using quotes from interviews and documents to illustrate key themes. Findings can be discussed within the context of the collective efficacy framework, showing how each dimension contributes to—or undermines—the overall partnership's success.

Example of Reporting:

Trust and Problem-Solving Capacity: "As one participant noted, 'We knew we could rely on each other, so even when the funding got tight, we worked together to find solutions.' This illustrates the critical role trust plays in fostering problem-solving capacity, as the participants felt empowered to confront challenges together."

6. Limitations and Refinements

While this coding framework provides a structured approach, it is essential to note that coding can be subjective; the interpretation of data may vary. As you progress through the data, the coding framework should be refined to incorporate new insights, ensuring that all relevant themes are captured.

This coding framework is crucial for connecting Bandura's Collective Efficacy Theory with real-world evidence. By thematically categorizing interviews and documents, it becomes possible to reveal the psychological dynamics that shape collaborative governance in education, offering insights into the factors that strengthen or undermine effective partnerships