Breaking Barriers: Contextual Factors for Enhancing English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Teaching Self-Efficacy in Secondary Vocational Schools

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Abstract
When literature on the development of teaching self-efficacy and its efficacy-building experiences is rich in the field of education, still there is a lack of research aiming to consider the influence of contextual factors in enhancing teaching self-efficacy, especially in the context of secondary vocational school English as a foreign language teaching. The current exploratory study is meant to fill the gap by developing a framework for enhancing EFL teachers' teaching self-efficacy in secondary vocational schools. A semi-structured interview is carried out to explore contextual factors enhancing teaching self-efficacy. 12 experts were involved in the study. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis. Results showed that spiritual, material, and system culture of the school were associated with the enhancement of secondary vocational school EFL teachers' teaching efficacy. The article concludes by implying recommendations for policymakers and professional development providers in the field of secondary vocational EFL education, as well as suggesting potential avenues for future research.
Keywords: Teaching Self-efficacy, Enhancing Teaching Self-efficacy, EFL Teachers, Secondary Vocational Schools, School Culture

Introduction
Teaching self-efficacy is a teacher's perception of her or his abilities to teach effectively and facilitate students' learning (Shao, 2015; Wyatt, 2008, 2016). Researchers highlighted the role of teaching self-efficacy in determining the educational success or failure (Alibakhshi, Nikdel, et al., 2020; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). In classroom practice, teachers with a high level of teaching self-efficacy are more willing to adapt to new reforms and more eager to implement innovative and novel practices (Brighton, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). In addition, highly efficacious teachers maintain higher levels of student engagement and

spend more time on struggling students by perceiving them as teachable with extra attention (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012).

In light of these findings, enhancing teaching self-efficacy may promote the overall instructional qualities. However, enhancing teaching self-efficacy can be challenging to EFL teachers in secondary vocational schools because of the obstacles specified in vocational education contexts, such as students' poor academic achievement, disruptive classroom behaviors, the aging of vocational school teachers, and the outdated teaching equipment and facilities (Liu, 2018; Tong et al., 2008; Yang, 2010). Gaining insights into the enhancement of EFL teachers' teaching self-efficacy in this threatening context is not only significant to vocational education teacher educators as they strive to prepare and equip teachers in ways that can support their professional lives, but also crucial for vocational school administrators to formulate policies to foster an environment conducive to ongoing professional development. Although investigations on efficacy-building experiences contributing to the development of teaching self-efficacy have been carried out (Bautista, 2011; Morris & Usher, 2011; Naidoo & Naidoo, 2021), few in the aspect of context. Particularly, little is known about the contextual factors associated with the enhancement of EFL teachers' teaching self-efficacy in secondary vocational schools. This study is meant to fill this gap.

Literature Review
Theoretical Background
Bandura was the first psychologist to summarize the theoretical framework of self-efficacy, and he stated that self-efficacy beliefs are "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). He emphasized the significance of contextual factors "including the social, situational and temporal circumstances under which events occur" that influence self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, p. 200). Contextual factors involve "situational impediment, assistance provided by others, the adequacy of teaching resources or equipment available, and the circumstances under which an activity is performed" (Bandura, 1997, p. 83). Tschannen-Moran and her colleagues (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) involved contextual variables in their model of teachers' self-efficacy, as part of their definition of teachers' analysis of the teaching task. Labone (2004) also highlighted the need for greater understanding of the context factors that contribute to higher teaching self-efficacy.

Lu and Wu (2018) developed a model of promotion in teachers' teaching self-efficacy based on the current situation of China secondary school teachers' teaching self-efficacy, emphasizing the importance of school culture in the promotion of teachers' teaching self-efficacy, as seen in Figure 1 and 2.
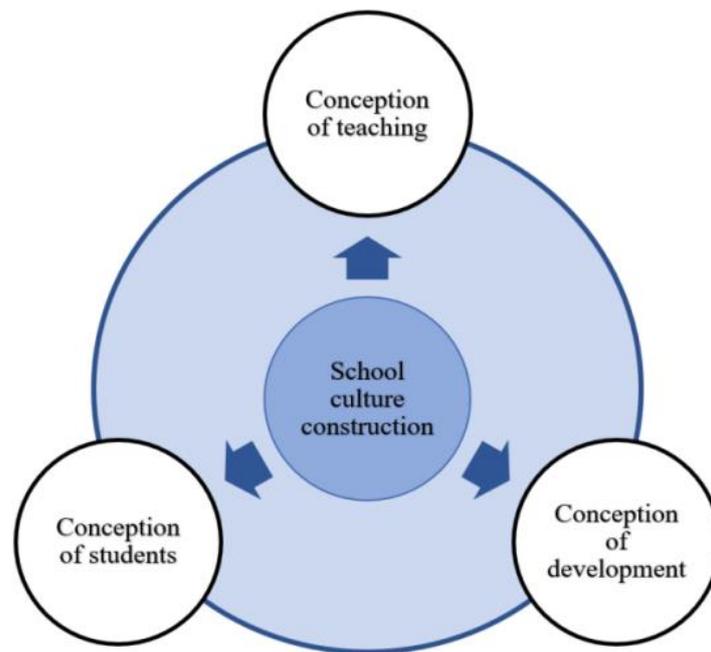
Figure 1 The Model of Promotion in Teachers' Teaching Self-efficacy (Lu & Wu, 2018)
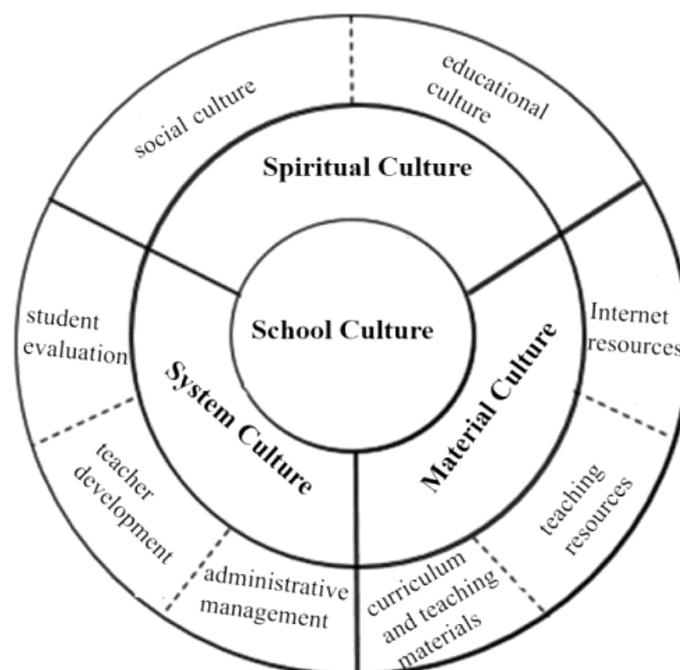

Figure 2 Components of School Culture (Lu & Wu, 2018)

Figure 1 and 2 illustrated promotion of teachers' teaching self-efficacy relied on conception of teaching, conception of students, conception of development, and school culture. School spiritual culture is related to social and educational culture. School material culture includes teaching resources, Internet resources, and curriculum and teaching materials. School system culture is consisting of administrative management system, teacher development, and student evaluation. The model mainly highlights the significant role of school culture in developing teaching self-efficacy, so it has been adopted as the theoretical framework of the study.

Contextual Factors Enhancing Teaching Self-efficacy

Researchers found that contextual factors such as support from administration, colleagues, community, and quality of work conditions and preservice and in-service training courses can enhance EFL teachers' teaching self-efficacy (Abdollahi, et al., 2020). Facilitative leadership styles are conducive to enhancing secondary school teachers' teaching self-efficacy by providing verbal appreciation (JO Odanga et al., 2018). Zheng and Gong (2018) also demonstrated that instructional leadership exerts influences on improving primary school teachers' teaching self-efficacy. Having a supportive principal plays a significant role in enhancing teaching self-efficacy. Furthermore, scholars indicated that positive relationship with colleagues, students, and students' parents could generate high teaching self-efficacy of teachers (Hajovsky et al., 2020; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

In addition to spiritual culture, material resources are also shed light on by researchers. The adequacy of traditional teaching resources like textbooks and reference books and online resources are closely linked with the enhancement of teaching self-efficacy (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Lu & Wu, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Nevertheless, the impact of technical support on teaching self-efficacy is mentioned by (Phan, 2016). Apart from providing the corresponding high-tech resources, the method of using these resources is also a significant consideration. The support of a professional technical team is equally important.

Regarding system culture, researchers hold that teacher professional development, professional title promotion, remuneration and welfare, and teacher workload. Opportunities to take part in various teacher education programs positively contribute to teachers' teaching self-efficacy, such as mentoring, professional learning communities, and teaching methods courses (Kulaksız & Pala, 2018; Mahalingappa et al., 2018; Mousavi, 2014; Zheng et al., 2021). Alleviating the work burden and adopting a reasonable income distribution mechanism can also enhance university EFL teachers' teaching self-efficacy (Yanyan Xiao, 2018). A well-established evaluation system specifically teachers' professional title promotion is related with the growth of teaching self-efficacy (Yue et al., 2019).

Teaching self-efficacy is contextually situated (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Insufficient attention has been attached to teachers' teaching self-efficacy in a challenging context. Commentators have long criticized the study of teachers' teaching self-efficacy due to heavy reliance on quantitative research methodologies, leading to confusion and limitations. Key points of contention include the formation and the development of teaching self-efficacy. In order to address these concerns and enhance the value of teaching self-efficacy research for teacher educators, there is an increasing recognition of the potential benefits of adopting qualitative research designs (Wyatt, 2014). This study is meant to fill the gap by employing semi-structured interview to explore contextual factors enhancing EFL teachers' teaching self-efficacy in China secondary vocational schools. The research question is as follows:

What contextual factors can enhance EFL teachers' teaching self-efficacy in China secondary vocational schools?

Methodology
Participants
This study is an exploratory method research. Participants are consisting of 12 experts. They were teaching and researching personnel, heads of English teaching research groups, and lecturers drawn from Provincial Teacher Training College and Academy of Educational Sciences, Universities or Colleges, and Secondary Vocational Schools. They are selected

because of their experience and expertise needed for this research. Table 1 provides the details of information of interviewees.

Table 1
Information of interviewees

No.	Gender	Years of teaching/ working experience	Professional title	Category	Code
1	Male	14	Associate Professor	Lecturer	LT1
2	Male	9	Associate Professor	Lecturer	LT2
3	Female	37	Associate Professor	Lecturer	LT3
4	Female	10	Associate Professor	Lecturer	LT4
5	Female	31	Senior Teacher	Teaching and researching personnel	TP1
6	Female	15	Associate Senior Teacher	Teaching and researching personnel	TP2
7	Male	23	Associate Senior Teacher	Teaching and researching personnel	TP3
8	Female	22	Associate Senior Teacher	English teaching research group head	EH1
9	Female	26	Associate Senior Teacher	English teaching research group head	EH2
10	Female	20	Associate Senior Teacher	English teaching research group head	EH3
11	Female	40	Associate Senior Teacher	English teaching research group head	EH4
12	Male	23	Associate Senior Teacher	English teaching research group head	EH5

Data Collection
An interview protocol was developed by the research based on Lu and Wu's (2018) model of promotion on teachers' teaching self-efficacy. The protocol is consisting of semi-structured open-ended questions about possible contextual factors enhancing teaching self-efficacy. Before the interviews began, the interviewed experts filled out the consent forms and were informed their identities would be kept confidential. All the interviews were carried out individually and lasted about 30-60 minutes. The researcher audio-recorded all the interviews and these were later transcribed. The interviews were conducted in Chinese, and the phrases used for the analysis were also in Chinese so that the meaning would not be lost in translation.

Validity and Reliability of Qualitative Studies
Validity and reliability of the interview protocol has been conducted. Two experts have carried out content and face validity. Additionally, a pilot study was carried out to assess the interview protocol's clarity.

Data Analysis
Thematic analysis is used to analyze the data obtained from semi-structured interview. Guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phases analytic tool for thematic analysis, the interviews were analyzed following the steps of familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, finding themes, revising themes, defining and naming themes, and producing reports. NVivo 12 software was employed to analyze the transcriptions. In addition, the transportation data underwent member checking.

Findings
The data analysis resulted in the identification of 3 themes and 11 sub-themes. Summary related to themes and subthemes is described in Table 2.

Table 2
Identified themes and subthemes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. School spiritual culture	1a: Democratic and fair atmosphere
	1b: Ethos of valuing education
	1c: Rapport with colleagues
	1d: Teacher-student relationship
2. School material culture	2a: Facilities and equipment
	2b: Digital and traditional resources
	2c: Technical support
3. School system culture	3a: Teacher professional development system
	3b: Professional title promotion
	3c: Teacher remuneration and welfare
	3d: Teaching management

Theme 1：School spiritual culture
Under the perspective of school spiritual culture, four sub-themes emerged: democratic and fair atmosphere, ethos of valuing education, rapport with colleagues, and teacher-student relationship.
Subtheme 1a: Democratic and fair atmosphere
…***if schools can create a democratic and relaxed atmosphere, my teaching self-efficacy will be enhanced***…*Sometimes, schools are too strict, and we are being overly regulated…[EH5]*
*If the school leaders can **focus more on Cultural Foundation Courses teachers** instead of teachers of Professional Courses, **treating every teacher fairly**… [EH2]*
Subtheme 1b: Ethos of valuing education
…***students are exerting diligent efforts to acquire skills, while teachers are diligently working to impart knowledge and skills…*** *the ethos of valuing education enhance every teacher's teaching self-efficacy [EH5]*
Subtheme 1c: Rapport with colleagues

*Effective communication among colleagues is significant in increasing my teaching self-efficacy, like **our colleagues can help with each other [TP1]***
Subtheme 1d: Teacher-student relationship
***Positive teacher-student relationships** serve as a source of social support for teachers… [EH1]*

Theme 2: School material culture
The school material culture yielded three subthemes, including facilities and equipment, digital and traditional resources, and technical support. The following excerpts are some of the experts' opinions regarding specific material culture enhancing teaching self-efficacy.
Subtheme 2a: Facilities and equipment
***A hardware facility, school buildings**. It is of necessity to equip teachers with hardware equipment [LT2]*
Subtheme 2b: Digital and traditional resources
*…**subscribe to teaching reference books and accompanying exercises** for teachers, contributing to our teaching self-efficacy [EH3]*
***Schools are increasingly applying for support from a variety of websites**… [LT3]*
Subtheme 2c: Technical support
*…having a team of **professional technical support** readily available to address web-related issues significantly enhance teachers' teaching self-efficacy [EH1]*
Theme 3: School system culture
The school system culture revealed four subthemes, which are teacher professional development system, professional title promotion, teacher remuneration and welfare, and teaching management.
Subtheme 3a: Teacher professional development system
*…teachers need training to exposure to new knowledge, and theories. Therefore, I think **schools should regularly send us for training**…[EH3]*
***Training requires financial resources**…[EH2].*
***Give sufficient time for teachers to participate in teacher training**… [TP3].*
Subtheme 3b: Professional title promotion
*The **evaluation of professional titles and promotion system** of the school are closely linked with teaching self-efficacy… [EH2]*
Subtheme 3c: Teacher remuneration and welfare
*If the teachers feel that their **salary** is at a very low level, it may affect teachers' teaching self-efficacy… [LT1]*
*The most important thing is to **solve the worries in teachers' lives**… [LT2]*
Subtheme 3d: Teaching management
*…**reasonable arrangement of the teacher's workload** [TP3]*
By examining school culture enhancing teaching self-efficacy, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of contextual factors enhancing teaching self-efficacy of secondary vocational school EFL teachers.

Discussion
Based on the findings of this study, a comprehensive framework for enhancing teaching self-efficacy of secondary vocational school EFL teachers was proposed, as seen in Figure 3. The framework encompasses three main component: school spiritual culture, material culture, and system culture, which echoes Lu and Wu's (2018) assertion that school culture construction can contribute to the enhancement of teaching self-efficacy.

School spiritual culture refers to the belief and value which is accumulated in the long-term historical development process and recognized by teachers and students. The school spiritual culture perspective of the framework emphasizes democratic and fair atmosphere, ethos of valuing education, rapport with colleagues, and teacher-student relationship. In the context of secondary vocational schools, a democratic atmosphere can enhance EFL teachers' teaching self-efficacy because when teachers engage in decision-making process, they feel respected whereas they rarely experience outside. Compared to general education, vocational education is not valued by the public in China. The Chinese traditional culture upholds the belief that academic talents hold a higher social status compared to the technical talents (Lu, 2012). Furthermore, a positive relationship with colleagues and students also enhance teaching self-efficacy (Hajovsky et al., 2020; Hu, 2013).

School material culture refers to the resources inside and outside of the school. The school material culture perspective of the framework highlights the significance of facilities and equipment, digital and traditional resources, and technical support in enhancing teaching self-efficacy. The findings are consistent with past studies such as (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2007; Aldridge and Fraser, 2016). In addition to offering online and offline resources, the influence of technical support in enhancing teaching self-efficacy also merit consideration as the emergence of more and more updated instructional technologies.

School system culture mainly refers to regulations, systems, and behavioral norms of a school. The school system culture perspective of the framework stressed the importance of teacher professional development system, professional title promotion, teacher remuneration and welfare, and teaching management in enhancing teaching self-efficacy. The finding is parallel to prior studies (Feng et al., 2019; Yu Xiao, 2018; Zheng et al., 2021). In the context of secondary vocational schools in China, there is a lack of training opportunities for EFL teachers compared to teachers of Professional Courses (Wang, 2018). Therefore, access to professional development plays a significant role in enhancing teaching self-efficacy within this specific educational setting. Increasing secondary vocational school EFL teachers' salary and lowering their work burden also guarantee their daily live, which are intertwined with their enhancement of teaching self-efficacy.

The depth of this discussion showcases the importance of school culture in enhancing teaching self-efficacy. The integration of school spiritual culture, school material culture, and school system culture enable teachers to support their own professional lives, ultimately improving the secondary vocational school EFL teaching qualities.
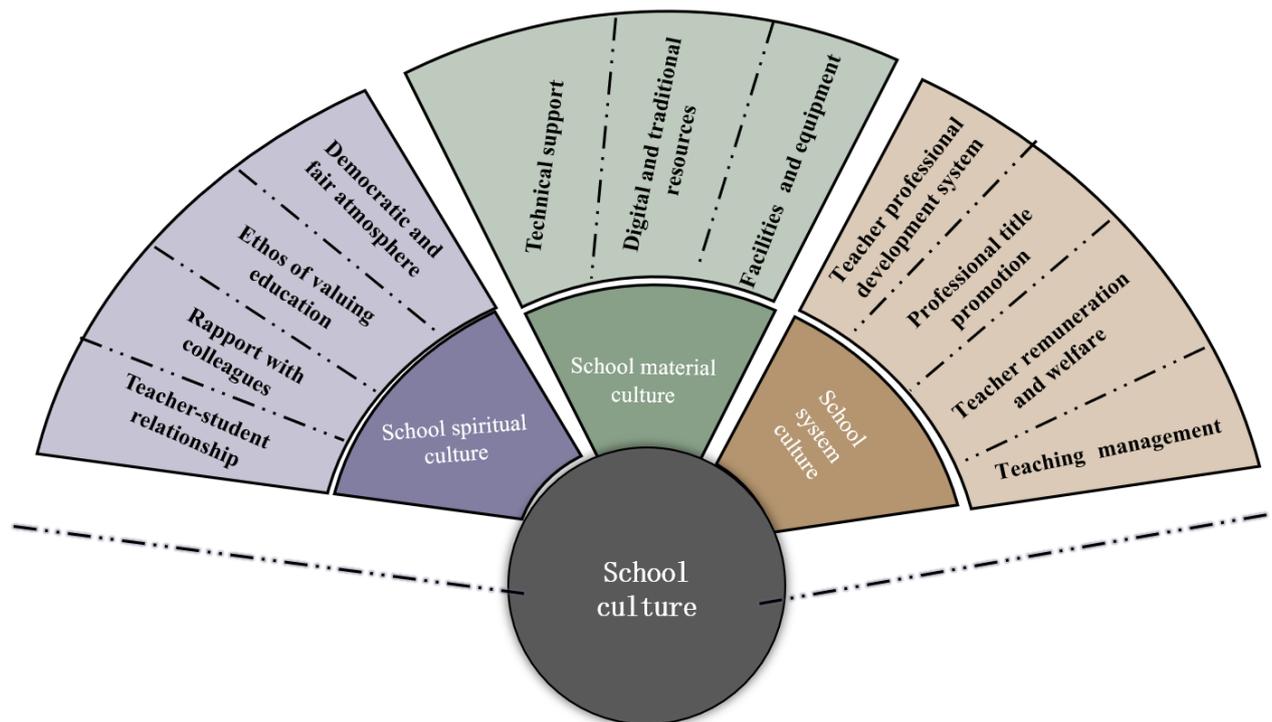
Figure 3 The framework for enhancing teaching self-efficacy of secondary vocational school EFL teachers

Conclusion

The core of this article is to explore contextual factors enhancing teaching self-efficacy of secondary vocational school EFL teachers and develop a framework for enhancing teachers' teaching self-efficacy. The three main themes that can enhance secondary vocational school EFL teachers' teaching self-efficacy are school spiritual culture, school material culture, and school system culture. Teachers' teaching self-efficacy is the determinant of EFL teaching qualities. The proposed framework holds the potential to have a significant impact on the field of vocational English education, making important contributions to enhancing teachers' teaching self-efficacy and improving vocational English educational quality, additionally, it offers valuable sources for teacher educators and school administrators to design professional development programs and formulate school policies to enhance teachers' teaching self-efficacy. Furthermore, this study also calls for more future research to the development and enhancement of teachers' teaching self-efficacy especially in a threatening context.

Acknowledgement

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