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# A Conceptual Paper on Relationship Between Principals' Instructional Leadership and School Effectiveness Through The Moderator: Teachers' Self-Efficacy

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**Abstract**

With rapid development of China, China's urbanization rate has continued to increase, which has triggered the migration of rural school-age children. Rural schools are facing such difficulties as student sources decreasing, scale shrinking, and school merging, resulting in the survival problem of a large number of small rural schools. This research aims to examines the relationship between instructional leadership and teachers' self-efficacy and the moderator role of teachers' self-efficacy on the relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness to promote the school effectiveness in rural countries in China. Although most studies have examined the direct relationship between principals' instructional leadership and school effectiveness, there are also studies have proven that through the path, the principals' instructional leadership can improve the school effectiveness. Based on a review of related studies on the working conditions of rural teachers, many studies focus on external objective factors such as salary, job rotation, and exchange, with few studies on the rural teachers' self-efficacy. The study will adopt a quantitative method. An correlational research will be employed to examine the relationship between variables. Population will be the primary teachers (male and female) from different rural schools in China. The findings of the study will be analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The implication of this study is that except the direct relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness, principals' instructional leadership also can influence the school effectiveness through teachers' self-efficacy to a greater extent.

**Keywords**: School Effectiveness, Teachers' Self-efficacy, Instructional Leadership

## Introduction

### Research Background

China's rapid urbanization has triggered the migration of rural school-age children. Rural schools are facing such difficulties as student sources decreasing, scale shrinking, and school merging, resulting in the survival problem of a large number of small rural schools (Wang, 2021). Small-scale rural schools are crucial to revitalizing rural areas, as they are intertwined with the local environment and culture. Thus, many rural children whose family can't afford the money in cities have no nearby school to attend (Qin, 2022). To deal with this situation, it

is unanimously agreed that it can only be achieved through the school effectiveness of rural schools (Gao & Wang, 2020). According to the China's national policy, the rural education is the vital for the advancement of the rural, and is also vital for the nation. The development of these schools is an essential aspect of integrated rural revitalization, which is vital for both local communities and the nation (Zhang, 2021). Thus, in the new era in China, promoting high-quality development of rural education, narrowing the gap in education quality among regions, and enabling rural children to receive high-quality education without falling behind at the starting line, are the core content of achieving high-quality educational fairness. Therefore, to promote the school effectiveness is a key role for the development of the rural primary school (Li, 2022).

Moreover, research studies on school effectiveness from the 1980s until today Hallinger and Murphy (1985); Hallinger and Heck (1996); Southworth (2002); Hallinger (2003); Leithwood et al (2006) show that the major factor affecting school effectiveness is the strength of the instructional leadership of school administrators who are involved with curriculum and instruction. In addition, teachers play an very important role in the educational system, school development, and effective school movements Balcı (2007); Özdemir (2000); Dahiru et al (2022), and the object of the instructional leadership is teachers. Hence, this research will focus on the relationship between the principal's instructional leadership and school effectiveness through teachers' self-efficacy in rural countries in China.

In general, most of the related existing researches focused on the direct relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness (Dahiru & Gbolahan, 2022). But the relationship of instructional leader to school effectiveness is indirect; while discussing this indirect role, Hallinger (2005) believed that leaders cannot lead by themselves, the collaboration of teachers is also needed for school effectiveness. However, limited evidence as moderators has been provided on the relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness, although the moderators could provide additional insights in China.

The gap in this research is that there is a little research on school effectiveness in China, especially the relationship between principals' instructional leadership and school effectiveness. In order to analyze the research on school effectiveness, this research used the keyword "school effectiveness" to search on CNKI and classified the downloaded materials. As a result, 112 published papers, 9 seminars, 1 newspaper, 21 master's theses, 0 doctoral theses, were collected, covering a time span of 29 years from 1994 to 2023. In addition, the variables chosen mainly focus on the school personnel like principal and teachers with regard to the reality: principals and teachers in rural schools are the most important key contributors to the rural education. This study builds upon various sights that more experience and references can be provided for the development of school effectiveness, more paths can be opened up for improving and expanding school effectiveness theories.

**Research Objectives**

This research is aimed to achieve the following set of objectives.

1.To determine the relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness in the rural primary schools in f China.

3.To determine the relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness through the moderator: teachers' self-efficacy in the rural primary schools in China.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions are formulated to meet the objectives stated above.

1.Is there any statistically significant relationship between the principal's instructional leadership and school effectiveness in the rural primary schools in China？
2. Is there any statistically significant relationship between principals' instructional leadership and teachers' self-efficacy in the rural primary schools in China？
3. Is there any statistically significant relationship between the principal's instructional leadership and school effectiveness through the moderator: the teachers' self efficacy in the rural primary schools in China？

**Research Hypothesis**

H1: There is a significant relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness in the rural primary schools in China.
H2: There is a significant relationship between principals' instructional leadership and school teachers' self-efficacy in the rural primary schools in China？
H3: There is a significant relationship between the principals' instructional leadership and school effectiveness through the moderator: the teachers' self-efficacy in the rural primary schools in China？

**Literature Review**

**School Effectiveness**

The concept of school effectiveness has been widely studied in educational research, and numerous studies have attempted to identify the factors that contribute to it. School effectiveness could be defined as a causal concept (Scheerens, 2000). It is also defined as the degree to which schools reach their goals, compared to other schools that are equalized, in terms of student-intake, through manipulation of of certain conditions by the school itself or the immediate school context. Similarly, it has been defined an effective school as one in which students progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake (Mortimore, 1991a). The hot spot of school effectiveness research is centered on the idea that "schools matter, that schools do have major effects upon children's development and that, to put it simply, schools do make a difference" (Reynolds & Creemers, 1990, pl). Moreover, many researchers put forward the factors related to the effective schools to improve school effectiveness. According to the literature, there are three main factors to be discussed: internal factors (Aggarwal-Gupta & Vohra, 2010; Bredeson, 1985; Reynolds & Teddlie , 2000), input-output factors (Scheerens & Creemers ,1989) and input-process-output (Edmonds, 1979 and Rutter et al., 1979). Nevertheless, effective schools are often associated with internal factors, external, input, process, and output. Many researchers have focused on students' cognitive outcomes in areas such as reading, mathematics or public examination results. Only a few researchers have paid attention to social/affective outcomes (eg Reynolds, 1976; Rutter, 1979; Mortimore et al., 1988a; Teddlie & Stringlield, 1993). However, all schools can be viewed as open systems that encompass inputs, a transformation process, outputs, feedback, and the environment (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Within the open-system framework, the outputs of a school encompass the functioning of teaching and learning interactions. Effectiveness indicators can be derived from each phase of the cycle, including inputs, the transformation process, and outputs (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

**Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leadership with its emergence out of the research on "instructionally effective elementary schools" e.g., Edmonds (1979), was described as a role carried out by the school

principal (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a). Instructional leadership can be the most influential leadership style on effective schools Robinson et al (2008), and there are various definitions of the term according to literature (Leithwood et al., 1999). However, in its broadest sense, it can be defined as "school leadership aiming to improve the learning of all students" (Hallinger et al., 2020). There are several notable models of instructional leadership (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985;Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1990; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). Hallinger & Murphy, 1985 proposed a model which has been considered the basis for the research of instructional leadership since then. This model, similar with many others models, proposed three dimensions for the instructional leadership role of the principal: Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate (Hallinger, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy,1985a). Defining a school's mission consist of two functions: framing the school's goals and communicating the school's goals (Hallinger, 2000). Managing the curriculum consisting of three leadership functions: supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, is centered on the coordination and control of instruction and curriculum (Hallinger, 2003). Promoting school climate is conceptualized as school principals' role to enhance the school climate by improving the learning environment, encouraging teachers, and saving time for teaching (Hallinger & Wang, 2015).

**Teachers' Self-efficacy**

Self efficacy has been defined by Bandura (1986) as an individual's judgment of personal competency to perform the courses of action which are essential to achieve4506 designated types of performance. Self-efficacy beliefs of a person determine the efforts that will be exerted and the sustainability of a person when facing challenges (Bandura, 1997). Teacher's self-efficacy is defined as "the capacity to take the students with even learning difficulties or unmotivated students to the level of learning" (TschannenMoran and Hoy, 2001). Wood & Bandura (1989) define self-efficacy as the belief in one's abilities to activate motivation, cognitive resources, and action series to ensure control over events in life. Generally, a teacher's efficacy refers to a judgment of teacher's capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated (Armor et al., 1976; Bandura, 1977). Teachers' self efficacy consists of the three dimensions: efficacy for instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Efficacy for instructional strategies refers to teachers' confidence in their ability to effectively plan and deliver instructional materials to their students (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).Classroom management refers to teachers' confidence in their ability to establish and maintain an orderly and productive classroom environment (Bandura, 2001).

## Conceptual Framework

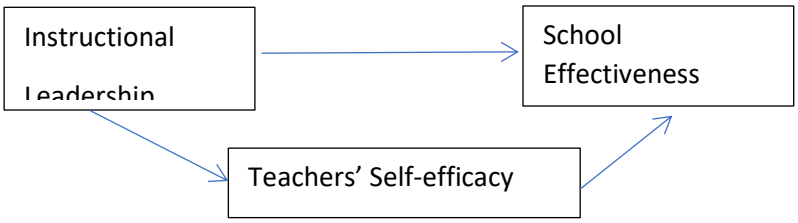


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

## Methodology

The research will adopt a quantitative method. Research design can be regarded as the general plan for conducting a research, which is the procedure involved in data collection, analysis and report writing (Creswell & Garrett, 2008). In this research, a correlational research design was adopted. Correlational research designs are quantitative methodologies employed by researchers to measure and assess the relationship between two or more variables and utilize these relationships to make predictions (Creswell & Garrett, 2008). The current study is conducted based on a descriptive correlational research design, which is the most appropriate method to determine the relationships between instructional leadership (IL), teachers self-efficacy (TSE) and school effectiveness (SE) in China's rural primary schools. Population denotes to the large collection to which the researcher plans to generalize the results of the study (Ary et al., 2013). In other words it refers to a collection of persons with the same features (Creswell & Garrett, 2008). Population will be the primary teachers (male and female) from different rural schools in Linfen, China. The sampling procedure will be convenient sampling, and teachers' participation will be quite voluntary. In this study, the selection of teachers was carried out using simple random sampling, which is a type of probability sampling method. Stuart (1984) underscores that probability sampling ensures that each element in the population has an equal chance of being chosen. The researcher utilized simple random sampling techniques, guaranteeing an equal opportunity for every individual in the population to be selected as a sample Online questionnaire will be shared with the participants. Principals' Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) Hallinger (2013) with 22 items was used to assess three constructs: defining school mission, managing instructional programm and creating school learning climate. Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) was used to measure teachers' self-efficacy. This construct includes: efficacy for instructional strategies (four items), efficacy for classroom management (four items), and efficacy for student engagement (four items), totally with 12 items. The School Effectiveness Index (SE-Index) is an assessment tool consisting of eight items that evaluates the overall effectiveness of a school across five dimensions: "quantity and quality of product, flexibility, adaptability, and efficiency". After the data will be collected, SPSS and Smart PLS will be used for statistical analysis. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) will be employed to examine the predictive power of relationship of instructional leadership on the school effectiveness through: teachers' self-efficacy.

## Discussions and Conclusion

Based on discussion above, it is expected that principles' instructional leadership will have a direct effect on school effectiveness. The relationship between instructional leadership and

school effectiveness is widely studied in educational management in the past century. Few studies have indicated teachers' self-efficacy as a significant predictor or a moderator in the relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness. The principals' instructional leadership is widely recognized as a crucial factor in determining school effectiveness (Adams et al., 2018; Deniz & Erdener, 2020; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). There is a significant relationship between instructional leadership and school effectiveness (Dahiru and Gbolahan, 2022). Xiaorong Ma and Marion (2022) also indicated that instructional leadership directly and positively affects teachers' self-efficacy.The dimension, developing school learning climate of instructional leadership was found positively and significantly relating to teachers' self-efficacy. This study also hopes to propose the same research contribution.

This paper is a conceptual paper, thus, lacking the findings. However, the researcher still try to focus on the area to get the data regarding the variables in subsequent research. The limitation for this research was that the research is conducted in rural primary schools in Linfen, Shanxi Province, which is located in the north of China. Therefore, the current analysis represents the situation in the relative economically developing northern regions. Whether the results can represent the central and the more economically developed eastern regions or the entire country still needs to be considered and tested. Moreover, a closed ended questionnaire is used to collect data from rural primary schools for this study, which lacks specialized and in-depth investigations and the answers are only limited in the scale of questionnaire. In addition, this study is conducted mainly in the perceptions of teachers, which don't cover the principals and students in the rural primary school. In future research, it may be possible to conduct based on the principals and students perception. The study highlights the significance of promoting school effectiveness in Linfen, China. The research also provides clear objectives and research questions to guide the study and provide direction for future research. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the instructional role of the principal and its impact on school effectiveness through teachers' self-efficacy. For policy makers, the findings can inform policy at the local, regional, and national levels by providing evidence on the importance of instructional leadership in educational reform and teacher development programs in rural primary schools.For instructional leaders in rural primary schools, a guideline map will be provide for instructional leaders in this research. The instructional leaders will apply the guideline to enhance the school effectiveness. In addition, principals will be aware that by showing their professional instructional leadership style and actively paying more attention to teachers' self-efficacy to motivate the teachers' vigor and increase self-confidence in teaching. Students in rural also can stand to gain from the improved educational practices that result from an increased school effectiveness. Enhanced teaching strategies and school environments that support effective instruction are likely to improve student engagement and learning outcomes.This research provides valuable insights that can help improve the instructional practices of principals and enhance teachers' self-efficacy, ultimately leading to improving school effectiveness.

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