

# The Practice of Headmaster Instructional Leadership and its Relationship with Teacher Self-Efficacy

Patricia Tan Mun Ee

Faculty of Education Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: patricia.tan0820@gmail.com,

Bity Salwana Alias

Research Centre of Educational Leadership and Policy Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,

43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: bity@ukm.edu.my,

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## Abstract

The effectiveness of an institution is determined by the strength and style of effective leadership. In Malaysia, past studies have shown inconsistent findings, such as the varying levels of instructional leadership in primary schools and the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy being moderate or weak. This concept paper aims to discuss the problem statement, research model, literature review, and implications of the study regarding the practice of instructional leadership and its relationship with teacher self-efficacy in Malaysia. To ensure that instructional leadership is continuously practiced, training and courses organized by the Ministry of Education Malaysia to strengthen the quality of instructional leadership and teacher professionalism enhancement courses need to be continued. This concept paper is hoped to help educators deepen the understanding of the 5th shift in the Malaysian Education Blueprint, which ensures that high-performing leaders are placed in schools, serving as literature related to instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy. It is also hoped to provide implications in terms of leadership training planning in schools to enhance the professional development of teachers. In conclusion, the practice of instructional leadership must be continuously implemented to improve teacher self-efficacy and ensure the continuous development of education quality.

**Keywords:** Instructional Leadership, Teacher Self-Efficacy, Relationship, Headmaster, Education

## Introduction

The excellence of a school is determined by the strength and effective leadership style. The Headmaster must take the initiative to bring a positive changes and implement systematic management within the education system to achieve the goals. Therefore, as a headmaster, it is essential to master and understand every dimension of instructional leadership to be able

to guide and motivate teachers in the teaching and learning process that can enhance the school excellence.

According to Hallinger & Murphy (1985), instructional leadership refers to all the actions taken by the headmaster with the aim of improving and enhancing the teaching and learning process in the school, involving teachers, students, parents, school planning and management, resources, and school culture to improve student performance and create an effective school. Therefore, the headmaster is required to enhance and elevate the quality of education. Based on a study by Ozdemir et al. (2020), the most effective way to achieve school development is to focus on the pedagogical aspects, support teacher professional development, and enhance the quality of student outcomes while engaging in the expected roles and responsibilities of a headmaster.

Whereas for self-efficacy, the concept is closely related to individual's personal belief of their ability to exert control over situations occurring in their life (Bandura, 2003). Bandura also stated that self-efficacy is the belief and confidence in one's ability to achieve a targeted goal. Belief in self-efficacy determines a person's feelings, thoughts, behaviour, and motivation. Therefore, teacher self-efficacy is the belief that a teacher has in their own abilities and skills as an educator. This statement is supported by Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), who stated that teachers' self-efficacy is a set of beliefs held by teachers about their ability to perform a series of actions to complete a teaching task successfully.

The Malaysian Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013-2025 has stated that school leaders must be capable of enhancing the outcomes of a school, and this is a key agenda of the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE). This clearly shows that the success of a school heavily depends on the leadership of the headmaster. The leadership style of the headmaster directly influences the self-efficacy of teachers. This statement is supported by the study of Ozdemir et al. (2020), which found that school headmasters have an influence on organizational components, including the development of school culture, determination of working conditions, improvement of students' academic success, and enhancement of teacher self-efficacy.

### **Problem Statement**

The issue of instructional leadership has long been a subject of debate in the context of education. However, in Malaysia, there are still gaps in understanding its practice and relationship with teacher self-efficacy. The implementation of instructional leadership has not been consistent across all schools, with some headmasters demonstrating a higher level of instructional leadership while others show moderate to low levels. This inconsistency affects the overall quality of education and teacher self-efficacy, leading to varying student outcomes.

One of the critical challenges faced by headmasters is balancing administrative responsibilities with instructional leadership roles. Many headmasters are often burdened with administrative tasks, leaving them with limited time to focus on instructional leadership. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of training and professional development opportunities focused on enhancing instructional leadership skills. Moreover, teachers' self-efficacy, which is crucial for effective teaching and learning, is influenced by the quality of instructional

leadership they receive. When instructional leadership is weak, teachers may lack confidence in their abilities, which can negatively impact their performance and student achievement.

Based on previous studies, there are findings that indicate the level of instructional leadership among school leaders is still unsatisfactory. According to Sinnu (2019), principals are seen as deviating from their primary role in the teaching and learning process, with insufficient supervision of teachers at the designated times. This is evident when principals become too busy with other tasks, neglecting their responsibilities as instructional leaders, particularly in terms of monitoring and supervising classroom teaching. The findings of this study are consistent with a study conducted abroad in the Philippines by Basanes (2020), which found that the level of instructional leadership among public primary school administrators was low. However, based on the study by Nuramal & Lail (2022), it was found that the level of instructional leadership practices among principals in SMKA (Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama) was generally high (mean=4.315, sd=0.630). Thus, the findings obtained from past studies are inconsistent.

A previous study conducted by Said & Jadin (2020) showed a weak relationship between instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy. Furthermore, a study by Ozdemir et al. (2020) indicated a moderate relationship between the instructional leadership of headmasters and teacher self-efficacy. Additionally, a study by Er & Ibrahim (2019) found that the analysis of their findings showed a significant and positive relationship between the level of instructional leadership of headmasters and the self-efficacy of novice teachers. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Hareesol et al. (2022), which stated that the dimensions of instructional leadership practices have successfully influenced the level of teacher efficacy in schools. Therefore, there are inconsistent findings from past studies that need to be explored.

## **Literature Review**

### *Instructional Leadership Model by Hallinger & Murphy (1985)*

In every transformation related to the education system in Malaysia, instructional leadership is among the aspects emphasized for implementation. The Hallinger & Murphy (1985) Instructional Leadership Model was developed by Philip Hallinger and Joseph Murphy with the aim of studying the instructional leadership behaviours of school leaders. This model is divided into three main dimensions of instructional leadership, namely (1) defining the school mission, (2) managing the instructional program, and (3) creating a positive school climate.

Hallinger (2003), also developed a theory of instructional leadership based on research into the roles of principals and headmasters (PGB) as instructional leaders, which explains the concept of leadership as a behaviour that encompasses elements such as clearly defining and communicating school goals, supervising and evaluating teacher instruction, monitoring student progress, coordinating the curriculum, protecting instructional time, promoting teacher professional development, maintaining high visibility, enforcing academic standards, and providing incentives for teachers and students.

Figure 1 below illustrates the three dimensions of the Hallinger & Murphy (1985), Instructional Leadership Model, along with the elements that clarify the roles of instructional leadership in schools.

Defining the school mission	Managing the instructional program	Creating a positive school climate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulating clear school goals</li> <li>• Communicating school goals clearly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervising and evaluating instruction</li> <li>• Coordinating the curriculum</li> <li>• Monitoring student progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting teaching time</li> <li>• Promoting professional development</li> <li>• Maintaining high visibility</li> <li>• Enforcing academic standards</li> <li>• Providing incentives to students</li> <li>• Providing incentives to teachers</li> </ul>

Source: Assessing Instructional Management Behavior of Principals, *The Elementary School Journal* (1985)

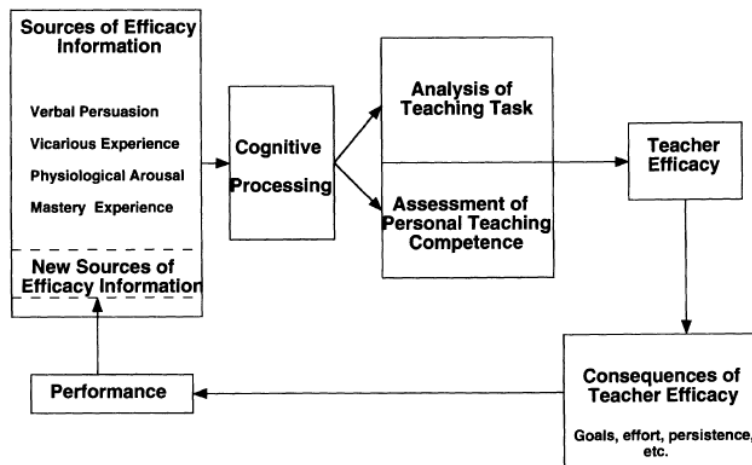
*Teacher Self-Efficacy Model by Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy (1998)*

Teacher self-efficacy, according to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), refers to teachers' belief in their own ability to plan and execute a series of actions required to complete teaching tasks within a specific context, as well as maintaining positive behaviours and attitudes toward their efforts. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), proposed a model suitable for measuring teacher self-efficacy, taking into account two crucial elements directly related to a teacher's core tasks: task analysis and teaching competency evaluation. This model also considers four sources of efficacy information: mastery experiences, verbal persuasion, direct experiences or observations, and physiological effects.

In this context, teacher self-efficacy is translated as the teachers' belief and confidence in their own ability to deliver instruction that can improve student performance. Based on the literature discussed, teacher self-efficacy in this study is operated through three main constructs: teaching strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. According to Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2007), school leadership is linked to teacher self-efficacy. Principals need to continuously support teachers to enhance their self-efficacy.

Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) identified three constructs representing teacher self-efficacy: efficacy in teaching strategies, efficacy in classroom management, and efficacy in student engagement. In this context, teacher self-efficacy regarding teaching strategies focuses on how teachers manage and control the teaching process. It relates to the teachers' ability to use teaching strategies when dealing with students of varying achievements and receptiveness. Teacher self-efficacy in this dimension also describes the level of confidence teachers have when faced with various levels of questions posed by students.

Figure 2 below illustrates the three dimensions of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Model by Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy (1998). This model shows that teacher self-efficacy, comprising elements of teaching strategies, student engagement, and classroom management during instruction, will influence student achievement.



Source: Tschannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy (1998)

#### *Previous Study on the Level of Instructional Leadership*

Previous studies have shown that instructional leadership can significantly impact school achievement and progress. According to Pamela & Hamid (2020), as instructional leaders, principals must ensure that all teachers under their supervision achieve the school's vision and mission, even amidst changes in the education system. This will indirectly positively impact student performance and elevate the school's status to that of an excellent institution. Arif & Salwana (2020) explain that instructional leadership is a relevant and highly practical management model for application in school administration and management. This is because instructional leadership can help principals adapt to curriculum transformations in education, especially when it involves the core tasks of teachers in schools.

Based on the SKPM monitoring results in Pahang, some schools still do not formulate, prepare, and disseminate the school's vision and mission to the organization and community (Aishah et al. 2022). This situation leads to school staff carrying out efforts and actions without a specific direction, goal, or focus. Hence, instructional leadership is a key determinant in improving school performance (Harris et al. 2019). According to Yvone & Norazah (2020), a study conducted in primary schools in Sandakan revealed that the dimensions of instructional leadership among principals were at a high level. The study found that the dimensions of managing instructional programs and fostering a positive school climate were at a high level. Therefore, the principal, as an instructional resource, is crucial in demonstrating effective classroom conditions to support learning outcomes. Effective and successful instructional leadership by principals is significant in schools because school leaders constantly interact with and influence all school members under their administration.

#### *Previous Study on the Level of Teacher Self-Efficacy*

Teacher self-efficacy is a cognitive process that involves measuring the level of confidence that mediates behavioural changes within an individual (Arif & Salwana, 2020). Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy can overcome difficulties and challenges in the teaching and learning process with greater effort and commitment, aiming to enhance their own skills. Seker (2021), agrees that teachers with high self-efficacy are capable of creating effective learning environments and handling challenging tasks.

Based on Abdullah et al. (2018)'s study of teachers at SMK Taman Semarak, Nilai, it was found that instructional leadership was the most frequently practiced and teacher self-efficacy was high. However, Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate relationship between instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy. Consequently, teachers with high self-efficacy are likely to improve student achievement and have a significant relationship with classroom management, teaching strategies, and student engagement dimensions. Therefore, principals need to continuously support teachers to enhance their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can drive individuals to be energetic, persistent, and capable of enduring and ensuring that assigned tasks are accomplished effectively. This statement is supported by Selcuk (2019), who found that higher teacher self-efficacy is associated with better performance in executing assigned tasks. Furthermore, for teachers in private schools, it was found that teacher self-efficacy is related to intrinsic motivation, ensuring that their performance as teachers remains unaffected (Soto-Perez et al. 2020).

#### *Previous Study on the Relationship Between Principal Instructional Leadership and Teacher Self-Efficacy*

Previous studies have shown a positive relationship between instructional leadership practices and teacher self-efficacy in schools. In Malaysia, research by Norazlinda et al. (2022) indicates a significant and moderate positive relationship between principal instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy. This finding suggests that high levels of instructional leadership by the principal are associated with high teacher self-efficacy, while low levels of instructional leadership correspond to lower teacher self-efficacy. This finding is supported by Bariyah et al. (2022), who also found a significant relationship between instructional leadership styles and teacher self-efficacy. Therefore, it is crucial to pay serious attention to the teaching and learning processes in the classroom. Principals, as school leaders, need to promote effective teaching among teachers and emphasize effective learning among students, as teacher factors play a significant role in influencing student achievement. Instructional leadership contributes to the quality of teaching (Hallinger 2011).

Globally, research by Ozdemir et al. (2020) demonstrates that principal instructional leadership behaviour affects teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy. Instructional leadership behaviour is crucial in encouraging academic achievement and fostering a student-centered learning environment. Their study also shows that positive instructional leadership behaviour contributes not only to teachers' self-efficacy regarding curriculum implementation, diverse teaching methods, and assessment but also enhances teachers' motivation, expectations, and task-oriented work. This clearly indicates that the instructional leadership practiced by principals directly impacts teacher self-efficacy.

Furthermore, research by Liu et al. (2021) highlights that the correlation between instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy is stronger than that between distributed leadership and teacher self-efficacy. This study emphasizes the importance of instructional leadership in improving teaching quality and enhancing teachers' teaching confidence. When teachers are confident and motivated, the teaching and learning process runs smoothly, leading to significant positive impacts and ultimately achieving the school's goal of producing outstanding students.

## **Implications**

In the era of globalization, the education system in Malaysia presents significant challenges for school leaders, particularly in ensuring that teachers continuously improve the quality of their teaching and learning to achieve high performance and meet school goals. To ensure the successful implementation of these goals, it is crucial for teachers to have strong self-efficacy.

### *Policy Implications*

This concept paper aims to contribute to developing leaders with instructional leadership capabilities and realizing Shift 5 of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, which focuses on placing high-performance leadership in every school. This demonstrates the Ministry of Education's (KPM) emphasis on having effective school leaders in all schools, particularly in instructional leadership. Additionally, this concept paper is expected to assist KPM, State Education Departments (JPN), and District Education Offices (PPD) in strengthening education policies related to instructional leadership practices and teacher self-efficacy in schools. The findings from this concept paper can provide positive implications for KPM, JPN, and PPD in evaluating, reflecting, and measuring the effectiveness of principal instructional leadership on teacher self-efficacy in schools. The results can also serve as a guide in developing contextually and culturally relevant leadership models for Malaysia.

### *Training Implications*

From a training perspective, this concept paper can serve as a guide for education planners in the criteria for selecting and planning the succession of educational leaders such as principals and headmasters. Additionally, leadership courses or workshops can be adapted to include instructional leadership elements covering the three dimensions of teaching strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. To ensure continuous practice of instructional leadership, training and courses organized by KPM to enhance instructional leadership quality and teacher professional development must be sustained. For example, JPN should focus on instructional leadership in professional development programs for two to three years, ensuring all school and district leaders master this aspect before implementing new leadership change programs. To strengthen professional development programs, the Institute of Educational Leadership (IAB) will expand existing training portfolios to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of each program in building instructional leadership skills, particularly in adapting structures, methods, and procedures to meet the needs of teachers and students.

### *Practice Implications*

Instructional leadership is fundamental to a school's excellence and closely related to student success. Therefore, principals and headmasters play a crucial role in achieving the school's goals, vision, and mission, particularly in teaching and learning. Instructional leaders must ensure that teachers work collaboratively towards curriculum goals and continually improve teaching quality. Moreover, principals and headmasters should ensure a conducive learning environment to facilitate effective teaching and learning processes. For principals or headmasters, this concept paper aims to enhance their understanding of instructional leadership in school management and to reassess the strengths and weaknesses of different leadership styles. It is evident that leaders who complete the National Professional Qualification for Educational Leadership (NPQEL) demonstrate high levels of leadership upon

returning to their schools (Muhamad Arif & Bity Salwana 2020). The results of this concept paper are also expected to help prospective headmasters apply the necessary leadership styles in schools to improve teacher self-efficacy and create a positive and effective school environment.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the practice of instructional leadership is crucial for enhancing teacher self-efficacy and ensuring the continuous improvement of education quality. Headmasters play a vital role in shaping the instructional practices within schools, and their leadership directly impacts teacher confidence and student achievement. To maintain high standards of instructional leadership, it is essential for the Ministry of Education Malaysia to continue providing training and professional development opportunities for headmasters and teachers alike. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth, schools can create an environment where both teachers and students thrive. The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on instructional leadership and provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers in the field of educational leadership.

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