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The Relationship between Instructional Leadership Practices and Leadership Self-Efficacy of School Leaders

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY OF SCHOOL LEADERS

by

CARTER BRAN AKINS

(Under the Direction of Juliann Sergi McBrayer)

ABSTRACT

With educational reform focused on school accountability, principals must attend to tasks that lead to school improvement. Identifying such tasks as instructional leadership practices and gaining a more comprehensive understanding of instructional leadership practices through leadership self-efficacy may contribute to school improvement. Thus, the purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate instructional leadership practices and the degree to which these practices predict the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. Participants in the survey were 100 principals and assistant principals of public schools in the southeastern United States, spanning 18 school districts, and 180 schools. Findings indicated instructional leadership practices of school leaders predict their leadership self-efficacy. More specifically, for every one unit increase in the area Supervising and Evaluating Instruction, self-efficacy increases by $\beta = .321$ standard deviations. Likewise, for every one unit increase in Monitoring Student Progress subscale, self-efficacy increases by $\beta = .302$ standard deviations. Additionally, there were statistically significant differences in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals, $t = 2.165$, $p = .033$. Educational leaders and key constituents may consider these results for reflection on practice as well as professional learning for skill development to attain school improvement. Recommendations for future research include expansion of the population

to include participants in other locations as well as the inclusion of additional instructional leadership practices.

INDEX WORDS: Instructional leadership, Instructional leadership practices, Leadership self-efficacy, School leaders, School improvement

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B.A., University of Georgia, 1999

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Suzanne Gillis Akins, and our children: Lily Kate Akins, Branson Louis Akins, Ruth Marie Akins, and Henry Carter Akins. May you follow and dream.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Everything rises and falls on leadership” (Maxwell, 1993, p. viii). Leadership is “a main indicator in determining the success of an organization” (Goolamally & Ahmad, 2014, p. 123). Whether chairing a major corporation, directing a non-profit organization, or leading a school, leadership is critical to the success, influence, significance, and sustainability of the organization. Due to increasing accountability measures for schools, leadership of the school, whether in the form of principal or teacher, is an emerging topic of discussion. School principals are the leaders who impact the direction of schools through their thinking, practices, and relationships reiterating the idea of how “leaders think in the long term, look outside as well as inside, and influence constituents” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 345). Therefore, this study centered on having a better understanding of the thoughts, actions, and decisions of principals and revealed core instructional leadership practices contributing to school improvement. In addition, engaging principals in reflection, or a process of self-perception of their thoughts, actions, and decisions, identified sound instructional leadership practices while also demonstrating a principal’s self-efficacy in regard to instructional leadership practices. A delve into the literature was intended to highlight principal self-efficacy of instructional leadership practices. Additionally, identifying methods for improved instructional leadership practices revealed professional learning is needed to impact school improvement. These potential ideas presented a gap in literature thereby supporting further research.

Background

To fully understand the relationship between instructional leadership practices and self-efficacy, a thorough review of literature was conducted to explore instructional leadership, the principal and assistant principal roles in regard to instructional leadership, self-efficacy, self-

perception, school improvement, measurement of self-efficacy and instructional leadership, and professional learning. Reviewing these concepts related to the instructional leadership practices of school leaders highlighted how such practices predict leadership self-efficacy and provided a better understanding of what a school leader needs when working toward school improvement.

Instructional Leadership

In a seminal study, Hallinger and Murphy (1986) supplied one of the earliest and simplest definitions of instructional leadership as “the core responsibilities of principals that contribute to student learning” (p. 4). This definition has somewhat evolved over time, and a more purposeful view of instructional leadership is “an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teacher and learning” (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013, p. 7). While the definition of instructional leadership has been updated, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) presented a framework of instructional leadership categorized by the dimensions of defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate.

In an additional seminal study, instructional leadership practices were compared to successful leadership involving direction setting, people development, and organizational design, and findings showed significant contributions to student learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Instructional leadership practices focused staff on teaching and learning, inspired teacher belief in the achievement of all students, built teacher capacity and commitment to change, provided practical assistance in developing faculty knowledge and instructional skills, and created school conditions for teacher potential to meet the needs of all students (Hallinger, Hosseingholizadeh, Hashemi, & Kouhsari, 2018). Instructional leadership, principal self-efficacy, and collective teacher efficacy were found to have statistically significant relationships

as practices within a school that can be changed to potentially raise student learning and lead to school improvement (Hallinger et al., 2018). Instructional leadership practices influenced a school's climate when impacting the attitudes of students and staff through achievement recognition, clear expectations, value of time, and professional learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Leadership of a school can be defined in a variety of ways and implemented through numerous models. Whether school leaders choose to lead by transformational leadership, distributed leadership, instructional leadership, or a combination, leadership practices influence schools. Viewing principal decisions and actions through a framework of instructional leadership practices related to mission, management, and climate focused this study on behaviors that lead to school improvement; therefore, instructional leadership served as the theoretical framework for this study.

The Principal and Assistant Principal as Instructional Leaders

School principals are the leaders who impact the direction of schools through their thinking, practices, and relationships. Multiple studies have revealed the connection principals have to the instructional programs of schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Goolamally & Ahmad, 2014). Principals, by title and position, serve as the individuals who provide the direction, influence, and support the teachers, staff, and students, and many often consider principals the primary leaders of their schools.

Yet, a principal is not the sole influencer of a school. In fact, the idea of instructional leadership extends to others like teachers, instructional coaches, and assistant principals. Principals cannot accomplish the full task of school leadership alone, and the presence and support from individuals identified as assistant principals enable principals to meet school

improvement goals through shared instructional leadership practices (Atkinson, 2013; Mercer, 2016).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, or a belief in one's abilities, initially emerged in the seminal research of Bandura (1977). Through human behavioral theory, Bandura (1977) researched self-efficacy and defined it as "the strength of people's convictions in their own effectiveness" (p. 193). Self-efficacy forms from four sources of information of one's perceived expectations: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977). Further research of Bandura's seminal study has modernized and enriched the definition of self-efficacy, connecting it to tasks, performance, and confidence (Hattie, 2012; Hattie & Yates, 2014; Kelleher, 2016; McCormick, Tanguma, & Lopez-Forment, 2002; Murphy & Johnson, 2016).

Leadership self-efficacy is a more specific strain of self-efficacy. An extended research on leadership self-efficacy defined it as "self-assessment of one's perceived capability to organize and implement action required to effectively lead organizational change to achieve a performance outcome" (McBrayer et al., 2018, p. 603). Leadership self-efficacy is connected to successful and effective organizations and effective schools (Goolamally & Ahmad, 2014; Kelleher, 2016; McCormick et al., 2002; Murphy & Johnson, 2016). Self-efficacy and leadership self-efficacy extended to the educational arena when reviewing the relationship between self-efficacy and school leaders and impacting school improvement (Cobanoglu & Yurek, 2018; DeWitt, 2017; Duran & Yildirim, 2017; Kelleher, 2016; Versland & Erickson, 2017).

Self-Perception

Understanding one's self-efficacy requires a process of self-reflection in an effort to reveal one's self-perceptions, which in turn may yield outcomes to influence changes in behavior. In addressing leaders, Maxwell (2014) stated, "If you want to grow your potential, you must know yourself: your strengths and weaknesses, your interests and opportunities" (p. 9). Providing principals ways to reflect upon their instructional leadership practices not only aided in identifying such practices but also potentially enhanced their confidence and frequency in following those practices. In turn, this insight is intended to assist principals with the task of improving schools. Therefore, engaging school leaders in a study of their leadership practices created a mechanism for principals to reflect upon their thinking and practices and to determine how instructional leadership practices may predict school leaders' self-efficacy.

School Improvement

Central to the idea of education is the evaluation of schools. In the United States, significant change occurred in education through the authorization of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and its reauthorizations in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). With each passage, the focus on school accountability increased as the importance of improved student achievement elevated in public expectation. At the state level the impact of these federal education acts is realized through the corresponding focus on school accountability related to student achievement state mandates like the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) for public schools in Georgia. Thus, school systems and individual schools are required to analyze factors that influence student achievement by embarking upon self-reflection to review the systems,

examining individuals, actions, and practices impacting achievement and contributing to school improvement.

Improvements in student achievement and school environment can be viewed in the all-encompassing term of school improvement, and school improvement leadership is defined as “an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate an evolving set of strategies toward improvements in teaching and learning” (Heck & Hallinger, 2009, p. 662). Leadership is a key component of school improvement as a principal is the primary leader of the school served, and his/her decisions and actions are directly connected to school improvement. A principal’s knowledge of or engagement in principal instructional leadership practices influences the outcome of student achievement and thus may lead to school improvement. This suggested that a principal need to not only be aware of his/her impact but also engage in self-reflection to understand their principal instructional leadership practices, leadership self-efficacy, and influence of their practices on his/her school outcomes.

Measurement: Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS)

Engaging individuals in self-reflection necessitated measurement instruments that to this study specifically review instructional leadership practices and self-efficacy. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) used the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) as a tool to assess instructional leadership. The survey is composed of 71 behavior statements related to instructional leadership. The behavioral statements are further organized into 11 categories: Framing the School Goals; Communicating the School Goals; Supervising and Evaluating Instruction; Coordinating the Curriculum; Monitoring Student Progress; Protecting Instructional Time; Maintaining High Visibility; Providing Incentives for Teachers; Promoting Professional Development; Developing and Enforcing Academic Standards; and Providing Incentives for

Learning. Multiple studies validated the use and reliability of the scale for the assessment of instructional leadership (Hallinger, Wang, & Chen, 2013).

Measurement: School Leaders' Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES)

Petridou, Nicolaidou, and Williams (2014) composed the School Leaders' Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES) as an instrument to measure the self-efficacy of school leaders and acknowledged its ongoing validation. The survey is composed of 31 statements related to school leadership and self-efficacy and is divided into eight factors or categories: Creating an Appropriate Structure; Leading and Managing the Learning Organization; School Self-Evaluation for School Improvement; Developing a Positive Climate – Managing Conflicts; Evaluating Classroom Practices; Adhering to Community and Policy Demands; Monitoring Learning; and Leadership of Continuous Professional Development – Developing Others

Professional Learning

Serving as the primary leader of a school, a principal has been found to determine the practices and impact of professional learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). As a principal engages in professional learning, he or she sets the direction and engagement in school and teacher professional learning opportunities. Not only is learning important to leaders, but multiple studies demonstrated the importance of principal instructional leadership practices connected to professional learning (Blase & Blase, 1999; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood et al., 2004).

In summary, a principal serves as the leader of a school, exercising leadership through their instructional leadership practices. With school improvement as a primary responsibility of principals, identifying and understanding instructional leadership practices that lead to school improvement is paramount. Therefore, this study focused on investigating instructional

leadership practices and those exercised by principals, which helped in the understanding of the self-efficacy of principals. Additionally, this study identified strengths and areas for improvement through professional learning with instructional leadership practices so that principals can develop their skills to attain school improvement.

Statement of the Problem

With the ever-increasing importance of school accountability, principals must attend to tasks that lead to school improvement. Identifying such tasks as instructional leadership practices allowed principals to align their tasks to those that enhance school improvement. A measure of self-efficacy helped determine how a principal perceives his or her influence on school improvement through their instructional leadership practices. Gaining a more comprehensive understanding of instructional leadership practices through leadership self-efficacy assisted principals in identifying areas of strength and areas for improvement. Furthermore, it supported principals in focusing on their strengths in instructional leadership practices and provided guidance in seeking professional learning opportunities to develop other practices in order to attain school improvement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate instructional leadership practices and the degree to which these practices predict the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. Instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy were the researched variables.

Research Questions

The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of the instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy of school leaders to determine the degree to which instructional leadership practices predict leadership self-efficacy. Therefore, the overarching

question guiding this study was: To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders predictive of leadership self-efficacy? More specifically, the study examined the relationship between instructional leadership practices and self-efficacy with the following sub-questions: 1. To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders related to supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress predictive of leadership self-efficacy?; and 2. What differences exist in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals?

Through these questions, the researcher examined leadership self-efficacy, instructional leadership practices, and the differences between the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders serving as principals and assistant principals. Findings from this study were intended to reveal the degree to which leadership self-efficacy is predicted by the instructional leadership practices of school leaders. Additionally, findings from this study compared the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders (both principals and assistant principals) to their instructional leadership practices and informed professional learning development to assist school leaders in growing their instructional leadership practices for school improvement.

Significance of the Study

Investigating instructional leadership practices and the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders added to the existing body of research including a contribution to professional learning development for current and future leaders regarding instructional leadership practices for improved practice and school improvement. Analysis of instructional leadership practices not only informed the understanding of such practices but also contributed to a better understanding of how instructional leadership practices predict leadership self-efficacy. Thus, further study

warranted a broader understanding and solidified findings related to instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy of school leaders.

Procedures

Researching leadership self-efficacy as predicted by the instructional leadership practices of school leaders served as the intention of this quantitative study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) supported the use of quantitative research for “understanding the best predictors of outcomes,” and this study centered on the predictability of leadership self-efficacy based on instructional leadership practices (p. 19). Selecting a survey as the research method for this study into leadership self-efficacy and instructional leadership practices complemented the study design, benefitted the researcher with a quick response rate for data collection, and assisted in data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By inviting school leaders to respond to this survey at one point in time, this study was conducted as a cross-sectional survey (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data analysis utilized descriptive statistical measures including mean, variance, and range, and employed a correlational design by factoring the relationship between two variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants in this survey were selected based on their school leadership assignments in public schools in southeastern Georgia, specifically schools within the First District Regional Educational Service Agency (FDRESA). Convenience sampling was utilized due to the role of the researcher and access to participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Principals and assistant principals in 18 school systems in FDRESA were the population for this study. Of the 180 schools, 97 schools were elementary schools serving students in Pre-Kindergarten through grade five, while nine schools served students in Pre-Kindergarten through grade eight and were considered elementary/middle schools, and 38 were middle schools serving students in grades

six through eight. One additional school served students in grades six – 12 and was considered a middle/high school. Of the 180 schools, 35 were high schools serving students in grades nine through 12.

The survey instrumentation selected for this research was a modified instrument composed of four sections (see Appendix A). The first section of the survey consisted of demographic questions collecting data from participants. Questions related to role or assignment (principal or assistant principal), work setting, years of experience in the role or assignment, gender, and level of education sought general information to be used in data analysis. The second section of the survey assessed the instructional leadership practices using Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). The third section of the survey assessed leadership self-efficacy with School Leaders' Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES; Petridou et al., 2014). The fourth section of the survey was an open-ended prompt where participants were asked to respond to a statement regarding influences on school improvement not represented in the survey.

Prior to contacting participants and administering the survey, the researcher requested and received permission from the District Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Georgia Southern University IRB. An invitation to survey email (see Appendix C) was distributed electronically to principals and assistant principals requesting their participation in the survey and included the purpose and significance of the research, approval from IRB, anonymity assurance, implied consent, and a link to the survey using Qualtrics™. In addition, the invitation to survey email outlined the rights of the participant, including the voluntary nature of the survey, the right to skip over questions, and the choice to opt out of the survey. The invitation to

survey email also addressed the risks for completing the survey were “no more than risks associated with daily life experiences.”

The researcher used descriptive statistics and correlation measurement to examine the degree to which instructional leadership practices of school leaders predict leadership self-efficacy. These statistical means and measurements were used to answer the overarching question as well as corresponding sub-research questions. Within the survey, the researcher included an open-ended question, and this qualitative data were examined for patterns and trends related to quantitative data findings as well as the literature review. Results from the descriptive and correlational analysis were presented in tables and charts. In addition to specific survey results, the researcher presented information on participants, including respondents and non-respondents, and addressed response bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Demographic data as well as data related to instructional leadership practices from the PIMRS and data related to self-efficacy from the SLSES were presented with descriptive statistics, correlational measurement, and total scale scores in tables for each instrument addressing each sub-section of the survey. The inclusion of descriptive statistics provided pertinent information in regard to survey participants, their instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy, and how their instructional leadership practices predict leadership self-efficacy.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

Rather than collecting data through observable means, the generalizability of the results is limited with data regarding leadership self-efficacy and instructional leadership practices obtained through online survey methods. With the voluntary nature of survey completion, the researcher assumed responses and perceptions varied among participants as well as those of non-

participants. Likewise, responses were dependent upon job satisfaction and life experiences, which influence job performance.

Additionally, factors such as years of principal and assistant principal experience, years in the current setting and assignment, and other circumstances limited generalizability of results. The researcher assumed these factors and circumstances influenced instructional leadership practices of school leaders and their leadership self-efficacy; however, efforts to remove any bias were shared in the survey invitation and acknowledged in the analysis and discussion of results. This study only focused on the instructional leadership practices of school leaders limiting the inclusion of other leadership practices or concepts, influencers, and impacts that may impact leadership efforts. The researcher acknowledged that many other leadership practices may influence the decisions of principals and assistant principals. Confining the study to public schools in southeastern Georgia limited the findings as they serve as a sample under a specific geographic reference point. The researcher assumed a regional study of principals and assistant principals provided a fine-tuned look at the relationship of instructional leadership practices and self-efficacy in a particular setting and environment operating under similar circumstances and expectations. Even considering these limitations, review of data provided information to inform the study and lead to additional information and trends for further research.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following key terms are defined:

Principal – principal is defined as the one individual in charge of and leading the school.

School Leader – school leader is defined as an individual in the role of principal or assistant principal.

Instructional Leadership – Researched and defined by many, instructional leadership is simply the leading of a school. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) provided one of the earliest and simplest definitions of instructional leadership as “the core responsibilities of principals that contribute to student learning” (p. 4). In addition, a more purposeful definition of instructional leadership is “an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teaching and learning” (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013, p. 7), and thus, will be utilized as the definition for this study.

School Climate – a broad term connected to organizational climate but associated with school organization. According to Hoy (1990), school climate includes “teachers’ perceptions of their general work environment.” Hoy also shared how climate “is influenced by the formal organization, informal organization, personalities of participants, and the leadership of the school” (p. 151). For the purposes of this study, school climate will be defined as the collective personalities and perceptions of students, teachers, administrators, and staff.

Instructional Leadership Framework – the framework for instructional leadership based on the research of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) where instructional leadership is categorized by the dimensions of defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate.

Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) – The PIMRS is a survey used in this study to measure instructional leadership practices. The PIMRS assesses the three dimensions of instructional leadership categorized as defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate (Hallinger

& Murphy, 1985). For the purposes of this study, the PIMRS will assess one dimension of instructional leadership categorized as managing the instructional program.

School improvement and school improvement leadership – school improvement and school improvement leadership is defined as “an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate an evolving set of strategies toward improvements in teaching and learning” (Heck & Hallinger, 2009, p. 662).

School Leaders’ Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES) – The SLSES is a survey used in this study to measure self-efficacy of school leaders. The SLSES assesses self-efficacy as divided into eight factors or categories: Creating an Appropriate Structure; Leading and Managing the Learning Organization; School Self-Evaluation for School Improvement; Developing a Positive Climate – Managing Conflicts; Evaluating Classroom Practices; Adhering to Community and Policy Demands; Monitoring Learning; Leadership of CPD – Developing Others (Petridou et al., 2014). For the purposes of this study, the SLSES will assess all categories.

Self-efficacy – First identified and explored by Bandura (1977) in human behavioral theory, self-efficacy is defined as “the strength of people’s convictions in their own effectiveness” (p. 193). Other researches have simplified or extended this definition, yet for the purposes of this study, self-efficacy will be defined as an individual’s belief in his or her abilities.

Leadership self-efficacy – An extension of self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1977), leader self-efficacy, or leadership self-efficacy, is defined as “one’s self-perceived capability to successfully lead a group” (McCormick et al., 2002, p. 43). Murphy and Johnson (2016) composed a simpler definition in defining leader self-efficacy as one’s beliefs in one’s

ability to succeed as a leader. McBrayer et al., (2018) also studied leadership self-efficacy and defined it as “self-assessment of one’s perceived capability to organize and implement action required to effectively lead organizational change to achieve a performance outcome” (p. 603). For the purposes of this study, leadership self-efficacy will be defined as an individual’s perceived ability to lead.

Chapter Summary

As a principal assumes the role of instructional leader, he or she must demonstrate a concern for students in implementing practices that are visionary, mission-based, and supportive of a positive school climate. It is with these instructional leadership practices that principals can promote school improvement. Principals can identify their instructional leadership practices through study into instructional leadership practices and reflection upon their individual instructional leadership practices. Once a principal identifies instructional leadership practices, realizing their self-efficacy, or strengths and areas of improvement in regard to their ability to lead individuals in those practices, is paramount. The relationship between instructional leadership practices and how they predict leadership self-efficacy may help principals identify their instructional leadership practices and engage in professional learning in an effort to attain school improvement.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

To fully understand the relationship between instructional leadership practices and self-efficacy, a thorough review of literature was conducted to explore instructional leadership, the principal and assistant principal roles in regard to instructional leadership, self-efficacy, self-perception, school improvement, measurement of self-efficacy and instructional leadership, and professional learning. The review of these ideas provided a better understanding of the research leading to the investigation of instructional leadership practices of school leaders and how such practices predict leadership self-efficacy in an effort to support school leaders in working towards school improvement.

Instructional Leadership

In a seminal study, Hallinger and Murphy (1986) provided one of the earliest and simplest definitions of instructional leadership as “the core responsibilities of principals that contribute to student learning” (p. 4). This definition has somewhat evolved over time, and a more purposeful view of instructional leadership is “an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teacher and learning” (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013, p. 7). While the definition of instructional leadership has been updated, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) presented a framework of instructional leadership categorized by the dimensions of defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate.

Leadership of a school can be defined in a variety of ways and implemented through numerous models. Whether school leaders choose to lead by transformational leadership, distributed leadership, instructional leadership, or a combination, leadership practices influence

schools. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) can be credited with a comprehensive and succinct review of instructional leadership, having created an instructional leadership framework where the general roles of principals are divided into three dimensions identified as defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate. Viewing principal decisions and actions through a framework of instructional leadership practices related to mission, management, and climate focused the study on behaviors that lead to school improvement. Therefore, instructional leadership served as the theoretical framework for this study.

Defining the School Mission

Defining the school mission is one of three dimensions of instructional leadership identified by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) clarified the idea of defining the school mission by breaking it down further into the subcategories of framing school goals and communicating school goals. In defining the school mission to establishing and communicating school goals, the researchers formed a base for their framework for instructional leadership. Subsequent research by Hallinger and Heck (1996) and Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) supported these findings and noted the identification of vision and goals as a significant mode through which school leaders impact learning. Additionally, high achieving schools were found to be led by principals with a firm personal belief and vision for education, supporting the importance of mission and vision as a practice of school leaders (Mombourquette, 2017).

The practice of defining the school mission connected to additional research. In a seminal leadership study on successful leadership, Leithwood et al., (2004) defined successful leadership as “setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization” (p. 5). Findings supported the contribution of successful leadership as significant to student learning

and yet only less important than classroom instruction. Consequently, instructional leadership can be described as school direction setting through teacher classroom practices (Leithwood et al., 2004). Developing a school mission can be termed as a layered approach to leadership when a principal combines instructional and transformational leadership practices over time and through different phases of the school (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016). When viewing instructional leadership as goal setting, curriculum planning, and teacher evaluation, and seeing transformational leadership as direction setting, people development, and organizational definition, these ideas partner to form a layered approach to school leadership (Day et al., 2016). Day et al. (2016) revealed patterns and common strategies of principals within schools classified as effective and successful, noting examination of assessment results, work driven by clear morals and ethical values, respect and trust of and among staff and parents, varied learning opportunities, and use of data as related strategies of transformational and instructional leadership practices employed by school principals. The researchers (2016) reported successful principals as those with qualities of intuition, knowledge, and strategy with practices that promote cultures of learning, engagement, and increased student achievement.

Successful school principals impact student outcomes through an interactive process dependent upon context as well as the core values and beliefs of principals (Mulford & Silins, 2011). In a model of successful school principals, the values of the principal form the purpose, or why, of the model, while the mission and vision describe how a principal leads to influence student and community outcomes (Mulford & Silins, 2011). Within a second model of successful school principals, outcomes related to academic achievement, social development, and student empowerment were found to be factors influenced by principal leadership (Mulford & Silins, 2011). Accountability, evaluation, capacity building, student social skill development,

and student empowerment served as common factors in successful schools (Mulford & Silins, 2011). A climate of trust and empowerment, a vision shared by the school, and a promotion of learning with a focus on experimentation, initiative, and professional exchange contributed to a further description of successful schools (Mulford & Silins, 2011). Additionally, the researchers noted the importance of “evaluation as a critical and reflective process” within successful schools (p. 77).

Managing the Instructional Program

A second dimension of school leadership defined by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) is managing the instructional program. The researchers simplified this dimension by identifying three separate functions to include supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. They related how these three functions translate into a principal’s central task of connecting school goals to classroom practice through communication and coordination, support, and monitoring of curriculum and instruction. Additionally, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) revealed the importance of aligning curriculum within the school and using assessment for “setting goals, assessing curriculum, evaluating instruction, and measuring progress toward school goals” (p. 223). They expanded the function of supervising and evaluating instruction to include how principals provide instructional support to teachers through feedback regarding classroom visits specifically related to “school goals translated to classroom practice” (p. 222). With coordinating the curriculum, the researchers described the importance of principals ensuring the alignment of curricular objectives to actual instruction and assessment as well as the “continuity in the curriculum across grade levels” (p. 222). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) identified the third function of the Managing the Instructional Program dimension as monitoring student progress and referenced the importance

to focus on both standardized and criterion-referenced assessments employed “to diagnose programmatic and student weaknesses, to evaluate the results of changes in the school’s instructional program, and to make classroom assignments” (p. 222). The researchers furthered this idea to share how principals inform teachers of test data and analysis for comparison to and direction of school goals.

Additional research highlights the importance of instructional leadership practices related to principal involvement in curriculum. Instructional leadership practices focused staff on teaching and learning, inspired teacher belief in the achievement of all students, built teacher capacity and commitment to change, provided practical assistance in developing faculty knowledge and instructional skills, and created school conditions for teacher potential to meet the needs of all students (Hallinger et al., 2018). Instructional leadership, principal self-efficacy, and collective teacher efficacy were found to have statistically significant relationships as practices within a school that can be changed to potentially raise student learning and lead to school improvement (Hallinger et al., 2018). Establishing goals and expectations, resourcing strategically, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, promoting and participating in teacher learning and development, and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment are identified as leadership dimensions related to instructional and transformational leadership types (Robinson et al., 2008). Instructional and transformational leadership practices are related to student outcomes, and comparison of these leadership types exposed the greater impact of instructional leadership as opposed to transformational leadership (Robinson, et al., 2008). Specifically, planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and curriculum, as well as promoting and taking part in teacher learning have demonstrated high effects and significant impact on student learning as related to instructional leadership (Robinson, et al., 2008).

Promoting a Positive Learning Climate

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) finalized their description of instructional leadership with the third dimension of promoting a positive learning climate and defined it as “the norms and attitudes of the staff and students that influence learning in the school” (p. 223). The researchers explained how principal leadership practices could impact the attitudes of students and staff through achievement recognition, clear expectations, value of time, and professional learning. To further the discussion and findings of positive climate, they named six areas where instructional leadership influences climate to include protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, developing and enforcing academic standards, and providing incentives for learning.

School climate is also defined as “teachers’ perceptions of their general work environment” and extends to include the organization (formal and informal), personalities, and leadership of a school (Hoy, 1990, p. 151). Thus, a comprehensive definition of school climate is defined as the collective personalities and perceptions of students, teachers, administrators, and staff, and can be categorized along a continuum from open to closed (Hoy, 1990). An open school climate is described as one where staff exhibits genuine behavior, the principal leads by example, teachers are committed and collaborate effectively, and overall behavior is authentic (Hoy, 1990). The perceptions of a school’s climate can rest on the principal and can emerge from the perceptions of teachers and the overall environment due to the behavior, leadership style, and level and frequency of support and resources from the principal (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015). As well, effective schools are found to be associated with climate, leadership, and instruction (Kelly, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005).

Further research reveals the connection of principal instructional leadership practices to a school's climate. Instructional leadership is related to principal interaction and work with teachers, specifically in the area of principal discussion with teachers in regard to encouraging teacher reflection and professional growth (Blase & Blase, 1999). The researchers (1999) expounded upon these themes sharing five direct avenues that principals use under the theme of talking with teachers to promote reflection and six ways principals followed the theme of promoting professional growth.

Instructional leadership as transformational leadership is connected with school climate and student achievement (Allen et al., 2015). Research findings demonstrated a close relationship between leadership and school climate and also categorized leadership as an important contributor to success (Allen et al., 2015). Research linked principal leadership practices to positive influence on school climate through teacher perceptions of principal attributes, principal motivation and empowerment of teachers, principal encouragement and development of teacher strengths, and principal support of new initiatives and the ability to work through problems (Allen et al., 2015). Likewise, the instructional leadership practices of principals are related to setting a school's climate and developing, implementing, and promoting an understanding of the school's mission and vision (Kelly et al., 2005). Specifically, the researchers (2005) revealed how "effective schools include strong leadership, a climate of expectation, an orderly but not rigid atmosphere, and effective communication" (p. 18). As an additional link with leadership to school climate and student achievement, the researchers discussed the importance of school leaders working with teachers to know their needs and help them share the school's vision as well as develop practices to promote school climate (Kelly et al., 2005).

In a study outlining connections between learning and achievement, instructional leaders are those who have a “major focus on creating a learning climate free of disruption, a system of clear teaching objectives, and high teacher expectations for teachers and students” (Hattie, 2012, p. 83). Additionally, instructional leaders were described as difference makers due to their beliefs, roles, and responsibilities, and they were also described as individuals who consider the importance of student learning within the school by minimizing interruptions to learning, sharing and promoting high expectations for teachers and students, making visits to classrooms, and analyzing learning within the school (Hattie, 2009). Instructional leadership has more power than transformational leadership on student outcomes, and instructional leaders promote challenging goals and set safe environments for reaching those goals (Hattie, 2009).

Instructional leadership is linked to collaborative leadership, and related practices involve efforts for enhanced school learning climate (DeWitt, 2017). The researcher further supported this idea in relating how instructional leaders “focus on learning” by working with staff to talk about what student learning looks like in classrooms. (p. 21). Instructional leadership is also connected to collaborative leadership having influence from and components of managerial, instructional, and transformational leadership (DeWitt, 2017). With an impact on classroom and schools, collaborative leadership is defined as “purposeful actions we take as leaders to enhance the instruction of teachers, build deep relationships with all stakeholders, and deepen our learning together” (pp. 3-4). Bystanders, Regulators, Negotiators, and Collaborators categorize leaders within a collaborative leadership framework (DeWitt, 2017). In this framework, Bystanders are individuals with low growth and low partnership. Regulators are individuals with high performance and a controlling demeanor. Negotiators are individuals with a self-focus in

seeking leadership and change. Collaborators are individuals who work with others to share the generation and implementation of school and classroom goals (DeWitt, 2017).

Embodying Visionary Leadership (EVL), descriptors within a set of standards applied to schools in Canada, is related to effective school leadership (Mombourquette, 2017). Seven descriptors within EVL are connected to components of instructional leadership (Mombourquette, 2017). The researcher revealed the first descriptor of EVL to be one connected to the beliefs of the principal regarding students' abilities to learn and the principal's practice to communicate such thinking and educational philosophy to stakeholders and shared how principals may set goals based upon their beliefs in students and "influence student achievement" (p. 21). A second descriptor of EVL related to the mission and vision of a school. Mombourquette (2017) discussed the importance of a principal's practice to align the school's mission and vision with that of the school district and referenced distributed leadership as shared leadership and "emblematic of community input" where a principal demonstrates visionary leadership through community engagement for school improvement (p. 21). The researcher described an additional descriptor of EVL as related to school culture with a discussion of steps a principal could take to apply strategies to strengthen school culture and when combined effectively with instructional leadership practices improve student learning and achievement. Change and innovation were identified as additional descriptors of EVL when stating how principals should be aware of change needs within the school to move learning onward. The list of descriptors of EVL concluded with those related to data analysis and continuous improvement which divided results into "higher than expected" and "lower than expected" achievement levels. Lastly, communication, mission and vision, community engagement, trust, and data were all part of the visionary practices in these schools (Mombourquette, 2017).

Instructional leadership is categorized as effective instructional leadership with a focus on student success, the significance of change, and the use of leadership strategies (Estrella-Henderson & Jessop, 2015). Additionally, instructional leadership practices rest on caring, honesty, openness, competence, reliability, trust, and the importance and priority of instructional quality (Estrella-Henderson & Jessop, 2015). A principal's power impacts students through instructional leadership practices that promote change and improvement within a school, falling just below the influence of a teacher (Fullan, 2010). A principal must foster relationships with stakeholders through planning and communication, participate with teachers in learning how to work with students, build capacity and connections through developing others and networking, focus on instruction, and maintain a purpose based on personal beliefs (Fullan, 2010). Such extensive research highlights the importance of a school's climate on student achievement and the connection principals have with both school climate and student achievement, specifically regarding their interactions with staff and students.

The Principal and Assistant Principal as Instructional Leaders

School principals are the leaders who impact the direction of schools through their thinking, practices, and relationships. In a seminal study, Hallinger (1986) connected core responsibilities of a principal and his or her leadership as key components and contributions to student learning. In another seminal study, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) categorized instructional leadership as defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate. Hallinger and Murphy (2013) shared, "While effective leadership cannot guarantee successful education reform, research affirms that sustainable school improvement is seldom found without active, skillful instructional leadership from principals and teachers" (p. 6). Goolamally and Ahmad (2014) reiterated this belief finding it necessary for

principals to be “efficient and intelligent in executing leadership tasks” (p. 70). As principals, by title and position, serve as the individuals who provide the direction, influence, and support to the teachers, staff, and students, many often consider them the primary leaders of schools.

Yet, a principal is not the sole influencer of a school. In fact, the idea of instructional leadership extends to others like teachers, instructional coaches, and assistant principals. Mercer (2016) stated, “Assistant principals are individuals that are close to the heart of instruction in most schools and affect a lot of change and assert a lot of grass roots leadership” (p. 89).

Additionally, assistant principals are not necessarily *assistants* as the name implies, rather, assistant principals are leaders, often co-leaders with principals, and carry the mission and vision of the school, as championed by the principal, to see the school operate efficiently and working to see that all aspects of student achievement and school improvement are met. Atkinson (2013) argued against the relevancy and lack of acknowledgement of contributions of assistant principals in “a one-person, heroic notion of school leadership” (p. 3). Principals cannot accomplish the full task of school leadership alone, and the presence and support from individuals identified as assistant principals enable principals to meet school improvement goals through shared instructional leadership practices.

Self-Efficacy and Leadership Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, or a belief in one’s abilities, initially emerged in the research of Bandura (1977). In a seminal study through human behavioral theory, Bandura (1977) researched self-efficacy and defined it as “the strength of people’s convictions in their own effectiveness” (p. 193). Self-efficacy forms from four sources of information of one’s perceived expectations: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977). With the source of performance accomplishments, one’s self-efficacy

increases through one's successful experiences and is lowered by one's failures, and thus, this idea of performance accomplishments is viewed as most significant to one's self-efficacy with its base formed on the mastery experiences of an individual (Bandura, 1977). Vicarious experience is identified as a second source of self-efficacy and forms from an individual's observations of others (modeled behavior) and then as compared to the individual's own behavior (Bandura, 1977). Verbal persuasion is a third source of information influencing an individual's self-efficacy as one is led to believe in themselves as suggested and persuaded by another (Bandura, 1977). Emotional arousal is identified as an additional source of self-efficacy and explained as how an individual makes a judgment of his/her behavior based on their emotions in circumstances (Bandura, 1977). While these four sources of self-efficacy emerged in initial research, more recent research has renamed and reclassified the four sources of self-efficacy development to include mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and physical and emotional state (Bandura, 2012).

Further research of Bandura's seminal study has modernized and enriched the definition of self-efficacy. Confidence is linked to self-efficacy in that it relates to an individual's belief in themselves (Murphy & Johnson, 2016). In developing one's learning, self-efficacy is connected to confidence and is categorized as high and low (Hattie, 2012). Effort also related to the connection between confidence and self-efficacy is noted (Hattie & Yates, 2014). The framework of confidence related to self-efficacy can be viewed in three levels "(a) global level of self-esteem, (b) domain level of perceived competency, and (c) task-related level, often called self-efficacy" (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 216). Self-esteem, competency, and tasks all connect to form one's self-efficacy (Hattie & Yates, 2014). Additional research further expands the definition of self-efficacy to include task-specific behaviors (McCormick et al., 2002; Murphy &

Johnson, 2016; Kelleher, 2016). Through the lens of hard tasks, individuals with high self-efficacy see such tasks as opportunities to learn while individuals with low self-efficacy avoid tasks and have a low or weak commitment to goals (Hattie, 2012).

Leadership self-efficacy is a more specific strain of self-efficacy. An extended research on leadership self-efficacy defined it as “self-assessment of one’s perceived capability to organize and implement action required to effectively lead organizational change to achieve a performance outcome” (McBrayer et al., 2018, p. 603). In a study to extend self-efficacy theory to leadership, leadership self-efficacy was defined as one’s successful leadership of a group, and a significant relationship was found between leadership self-efficacy and individuals assuming leadership roles and the frequency at which individuals assumed such roles (McCormick et al., 2002). Additionally, the study revealed a connection between leadership self-efficacy and the number of leadership role experiences, as well as the contribution that self-efficacy perceptions have on leadership success (McCormick et al., 2002). Knowledge of one’s abilities and a trust and appreciation of others within the organization and their efforts also supports the connection between self-efficacy and leadership (Goolamally & Ahmad, 2014). Further, the importance of self-efficacy to leadership roles contributes to leader effectiveness and self-efficacy development (Murphy & Johnson, 2016).

Self-efficacy and leadership self-efficacy extends to the educational arena when reviewing the relationship between self-efficacy and school leaders. Leadership self-efficacy is connected to principals and linked to principal leadership efforts related to effective leadership and schools, school structure, and instruction (Kelleher, 2016). Leadership self-efficacy of school leaders is related to the necessary cognitive and behavioral tasks to reach the goals of a group (Cobanoglu & Yurek, 2018). School leaders with a high self-efficacy are determined,

open to new strategies, positive, and responsible to student success (Cobanoglu & Yurek, 2018). The self-efficacy of school leaders can change and is related to leadership styles, specifically with transformational and transactional leadership (Cobanoglu & Yurek, 2018). In a related study on the self-efficacy of school leaders, the self-efficacy levels and happiness levels of school leaders were related where an increase in school administrator self-efficacy perceptions led to an increase in happiness levels (Duran & Yildirim, 2017). Likewise, high happiness levels led to high self-efficacy levels which also led to high leadership skills (Duran & Yildirim, 2017).

Self-efficacy and leadership self-efficacy within schools were also expanded to include collective teacher efficacy (DeWitt, 2017). Collective efficacy is defined as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). Viewing this definition of collective efficacy within the school setting, one can label the view of group efficacy as teacher collective efficacy and identify its formation and support as a responsibility of school leaders (DeWitt, 2017). Principal self-efficacy beliefs contributed to collective efficacy in teachers through a promotion of a collaborative culture with a resulting impact of increased student achievement (Versland & Erickson, 2017). Instructional focus, improved student achievement, teacher leadership development, and achieved school goals and mission contributed to the impact of a principal’s self-efficacy upon collective efficacy (Versland & Erickson, 2017). Additionally, principal self-efficacy is linked to inspiration of staff, leadership by example, participation in school professional development, and protection of the school’s mission as well as rooted in Bandura’s (1977) four sources of efficacy (Versland & Erickson, 2017).

Principal self-efficacy, instructional leadership, teacher collective efficacy, and teacher organizational commitment all have a strong relationship and potential impact to student learning

and school improvement (Hallinger et al., 2018). Belief and values of leaders, school improvement, principal instructional leadership and leader self-efficacy are also connected (Hallinger et al., 2018). A modest to moderate connection exists between leader self-efficacy, leadership practices, and classroom and school conditions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). In a study on principal instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher professional learning, findings suggested a relationship between principal self-efficacy and an instructional leadership framework formed by numerous researchers and studies, describing instructional leadership as practices that improve the quality of teaching and learning with indirect effects on student learning and as practices that sustain school improvement by strengthening teacher capacity through professional learning (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Additionally, principal self-efficacy is linked to leadership efforts that influence teacher attitudes and behaviors as well as student achievement and the influence of instructional leadership on teacher self-efficacy and professional learning (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). A significant connection exists between the instructional leadership of principals with the self-efficacy and collective efficacy of teachers (Calig, Sezgin, Kavgaci, & Kilinic, 2012).

As school leaders have an understanding of self-efficacy and begin to exercise their leadership self-efficacy through instructional leadership practices, efforts to make effective school improvement can occur and even grow through deeper understanding by means of professional learning. Through reflection, principals may study their self-perceptions of instructional leadership practices, garner an understanding of self-efficacy, and strengthen their instructional leadership practices through professional learning.

Self-Perception

To know one's self is to reflect upon one's thoughts and actions, essentially reviewing one's self-perceptions. Such reflection of one's self-perceptions may yield outcomes to influence changes in behavior. In addressing leaders, Maxwell (2014) stated, "If you want to grow your potential, you must know yourself including your strengths and weaknesses, your interests and opportunities" (p. 9). Teachers know their expertise by thinking on or evaluating their actions in the classroom and how their practices influence student learning and achievement (Hattie & Zierer, 2018). As principals evaluate and reflect upon their instructional leadership practices, they not only identify which practices they exhibit but also the frequency of those practices in their leadership decisions and even determine their strengths and areas of improvement as well as the beliefs in their abilities. The process of reflection through self-perceptions of instructional leadership practices may determine or predict a principal's self-efficacy.

School Improvement

Central to the idea of education is the evaluation of schools. With the advancement of society through technology development, population growth, and opportunity expansion, schools must adapt to this changing environment, as well as an evolving student body with intensified public expectation. In the United States (US), one can follow the significant change in education through the authorization of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and its reauthorizations in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). With each passage, the focus on school accountability has increased. At the state level one can also understand the impact of these federal education acts and corresponding focus on school accountability related to student achievement like the College and

Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) for public schools in Georgia. Student achievement is paramount, and public expectation asserts that schools work to see increases in student achievement. Thus, school systems and individual schools must analyze the systems and individuals in place that impact teaching and learning, and systems and schools must embark upon self-reflection to determine the extent to which actions and practices contribute to school improvement and from there identify appropriate professional learning needs.

Improvements in student achievement and school environment can be viewed in the all-encompassing term of school improvement, and school improvement leadership is defined as “an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate an evolving set of strategies toward improvements in teaching and learning” (Heck & Hallinger, 2009, p. 662). Leadership is a key component of school improvement as a principal is the primary leader of the school served, and his/her decisions and actions directly connect to school improvement. In fact, the leadership of the principal is linked to improvement in student learning and achievement and classified as “second only to classroom instruction” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 5). Leadership influence on student learning has an indirect contribution yet is linked to leader choices of time spent and attention paid to various parts of the school organization (Leithwood et al., 2004). Specifically, positive impact of leadership on student learning is related to how leaders define and lead a school through mission, goal setting, and relationships with teachers and community stakeholders (Leithwood et al., 2004).

School improvement and student achievement influence also occurs through leadership practices related to principal participation in teacher professional learning, principal involvement in and evaluation of curriculum, and principal establishment of school goals and expectations (Robinson et al., 2008). A principal’s knowledge of or engagement in principal instructional

leadership practices influences the outcome of student achievement and thus may lead to school improvement. This suggests the necessity of school leaders participating in self-reflection to be aware of their influence on school outcomes through their instructional leadership practices and their leadership self-efficacy.

Measurement: Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS)

Engaging school leaders in self-reflection and generating an understanding of self-perception necessitates measurement instruments that for this study specifically review instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) created the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), as a tool to assess instructional leadership. The survey is composed of 71 behavior statements related to instructional leadership. The behavioral statements are further organized into 11 categories: Framing the School Goals; Communicating the School Goals; Supervising and Evaluating Instruction; Coordinating the Curriculum; Monitoring Student Progress; Protecting Instructional Time; Maintaining High Visibility; Providing Incentives for Teachers; Promoting Professional Development; Developing and Enforcing Academic Standards; and Providing Incentives for Learning. Hallinger, Wang, and Chen (2013) reiterated findings that “PIMRS continues to be an instrument of choice among scholars studying principal leadership” and that it has “a consistent record of yielding reliable and valid data” (pp. 273 – 274). In a review of multiple studies using PIMRS to assess instructional leadership, Hallinger et al. (2013) found the scale to be reliable when used as a self-reporting mechanism for self-assessment as well as to inform principal evaluation.

Measurement: School Leaders' Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES)

Petridou, Nicolaidou, and Williams (2014) composed the School Leaders' Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES) as an instrument to measure the self-efficacy of school leaders. The survey is composed of 31 statements related to school leadership and self-efficacy and is divided into eight factors or categories: Creating an Appropriate Structure; Leading and Managing the Learning Organization; School Self-Evaluation for School Improvement; Developing a Positive Climate – Managing Conflicts; Evaluating Classroom Practices; Adhering to Community and Policy Demands; Monitoring Learning; and Leadership of Continuous Professional Development – Developing Others. Petridou et al. (2014) acknowledged the ongoing validation of the SLSES, yet the researchers also revealed the strong link the survey had with leader effectiveness through leadership reflection of his or her capabilities, functions, and efficacy.

Professional Learning

Serving as the primary leader of a school, a principal can determine the practices and impact of professional learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Principals are also individuals who lead by example and set the focus on the school and teachers (Hoy, 1990). Likewise, learning is connected to leading in that when learning ends, leading ends (Maxwell, 2007). As a principal engages in professional learning, he or she may set the direction and engagement in school and teacher professional learning opportunities. Not only is learning important to leaders, but multiple studies demonstrated the importance of principal instructional leadership practices connected to professional learning (Blase & Blase, 1999; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood et al., 2004).

The practice of principal promotion and participation in teacher professional learning, rather than in a support or sponsorship role, significantly impacts student achievement (Robinson

et al., 2008). In schools where principals are participants in professional learning, they are viewed as instructional leaders and a source of advice while their schools can be categorized as high performing (Robinson et al., 2008). The success of students and teachers depends upon how well principals fill their roles as leaders and how well they understand the contribution of professional learning to improved instructional practice and student achievement (Psencik & Brown, 2018). As school leaders know their schools and the characteristics that make them successful, principals can have a positive impact on student learning and achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). Principal professional learning communities can be a method for improved practice when support includes a focus on learning conditions, continuous improvement and means of impact, and supports the link between effective principal professional learning and effective teacher professional learning (Psencik & Brown, 2018).

Chapter Summary

In summary, a principal serves as the leader of a school and exercises leadership through instructional leadership practices. Engaging in professional learning on effective instructional leadership practices will improve practice and benefit school improvement. Instructional leadership practices are the means to which a principal moves toward school improvement, and with school improvement as a primary responsibility of principals, identifying and understanding instructional leadership practices that lead to school improvement is paramount. Additionally, having an understanding of the self-efficacy of principals will reveal the degree to which they believe they do their job and accomplish their goals and tasks. School principals, however, are not the only leaders within a school; therefore, viewing principals and assistant principals as school leaders will capture the influence of individuals in these positions. Investigating the self-efficacy of school leaders while examining the instructional leadership practices exercised by

school leaders may reveal how a school leader's instructional leadership practices predict his/her leadership self-efficacy. In addition, a study of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy of school leaders may identify strengths as well as areas of improvement for professional learning for school leaders to develop their skills in order to attain school improvement.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

As accountability of schools continues to increase, school improvement jumps to the forefront of practice with school leaders, revealing a need to improve teaching and learning practices that impact learning outcomes and school improvement (Hattie, 2012). Considering these accountability needs, this study sought to identify and measure the instructional leadership practices (specifically practices related to daily teaching and learning) of school leaders, as well as the leadership self-efficacy of their instructional leadership practices. Likewise, this study reached the intended result of revealing the strengths of school leaders as well as areas of improvement for the ultimate purpose of advancing professional practice and elevating school improvement.

Based on findings from the literature, two surveys were merged to measure leadership self-efficacy and the instructional leadership practices of school leaders. Petridou et al., (2014) compiled the School Leaders' Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES), which was used to measure leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) created the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) to assess principal practices related to instructional leadership. A specified portion of this latter survey was utilized, specifically in the category of instructional management, to measure instructional leadership practices.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate instructional leadership practices and the degree to which these practices predict the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. Instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy were the researched variables. The study was confined to school leaders in public schools in southeastern Georgia. Leadership self-efficacy of school leaders was gained through the SLSES, while a study into instructional

leadership practices of school leaders, specifically in the category of managing the instructional program, was reached through the PIMRS.

The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of the instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy of school leaders to determine the degree to which instructional leadership practices predict leadership self-efficacy. Therefore, the overarching question guiding this study was: To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders predictive of leadership self-efficacy? More specifically, the study examined the relationship between instructional leadership practices and self-efficacy with the following sub-questions: 1. To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders related to supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress predictive of leadership self-efficacy?; and 2. What differences exist in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals?

This chapter addresses research design methods, population, sample and sampling, and the survey instrument. Additionally, this chapter addresses data collection, data analysis, and concludes with a chapter summary.

Research Design

The intent of this quantitative study was to research leadership self-efficacy as predicted by the instructional leadership practices of school leaders. Creswell and Creswell (2018) supported the use of quantitative research “if the problem calls for (a) the identification of factors that influence an outcome, (b) the utility of an intervention, or (c) understanding the best predictors of outcomes” (p. 19). Because this study centers on the predictability of leadership self-efficacy by the instructional leadership practices of school leaders, a quantitative study best fits the research design. Further, this study used a survey method to review leadership self-

efficacy and the instructional leadership practices of school leaders. Selecting a survey as a research method was appropriate due to the quantitative nature of the research and the researcher's intent to gather data on the practices of a select population of school leadership (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, selecting a survey method complemented the design of the study in researching both self-efficacy and instructional leadership practices, benefitted the researcher with the quick response rate for data collection and assisted in data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By inviting principals and assistant principals to respond to a survey of their instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy, this study intended to gather data from one group at one point in time.

Thus, this study was conducted as a cross-sectional survey, and data were gathered using online survey methods directed to public school leaders in southeastern Georgia. Creswell and Creswell (2018) defined a cross-sectional survey as one "with the data collected at one point in time" (p. 149). Data analyses utilized descriptive statistical measures including mean, variance, and range (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition to descriptive statistics, data analyses employed a correlational design, defined as a means "to describe and measure the degree or association [or relationship] between two or more variables or sets of scores" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 12). The researcher used quantitative survey methods supported by descriptive statistics and correlation measurement to examine the degree to which instructional leadership practices of school leaders predict leadership self-efficacy. Specifically, the first and second research questions were answered by conducting an ordinary least squares regression (standard/simultaneous), with supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress serving as predictors and leadership self-efficacy serving as the criterion. The third research question was answered by conducting an independent samples *t*-test, with

administrator type (principal, assistant principal) serving as the independent variable and self-efficacy serving as the outcome. These statistical means and measurements were used to answer the overarching question as well as corresponding sub-research questions. Within the survey, the researcher included an open-ended question, and this qualitative data was examined for patterns and trends related to quantitative data findings as well as the literature review.

Population, Sample, and Sampling

Participants in this survey were selected based on their school leadership assignments in public schools in southeastern Georgia, specifically schools within the First District Regional Educational Service Agency (FDRESA). Access to schools and names of participants were available through online searches. With the researcher having online public access to these potential participants, a single-stage sampling procedure was used in this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Likewise, the researcher acknowledges the use of a convenience sampling according to the role of the researcher and access to participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Principals in 180 schools in 18 school systems in FDRESA located in southeastern Georgia were the population for this study. Although principals were the primary subject of study, the researcher also included assistant principals of the surveyed schools in the sample population. Including assistant principals of the corresponding 180 schools in 18 school systems of FDRESA located in southeastern Georgia broadened the scope of the study and provided insight into individuals not necessarily acting as the sole leader of a school but contributing to the leadership of a school. Of the 180 schools, 97 schools were elementary schools serving students in Pre-Kindergarten through grade five, while nine schools served students in Pre-Kindergarten through grade eight and considered elementary/middle schools, and 38 were middle schools serving students in grades six through eight. One additional school served students in grades six

through 12, considered a middle/high school. Of the 180 schools, 35 were high schools serving students in grades nine through 12. Thus, this population included a total of 451 school leaders breaking down to 180 principals and 271 assistant principals.

Instrumentation

The survey instrumentation selected for this research was a modified instrument composed of four sections (see Appendix A). The first section of the survey consisted of demographic questions collecting data from participants. Questions related to role or assignment (principal or assistant principal), work setting, years of experience in the role or assignment, gender, and level of education sought general information that may be used in data analysis.

The second section of the survey assessed the instructional leadership practices of school leaders using Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). In the second section of the survey, Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was utilized to assess the instructional leadership practices of school leaders and the researchers noted that the PIMRS is a reliable and valid tool to assess the instructional leadership of principals. With this survey, individuals respond to 71 behavior statements in regard to instructional leadership. These behavioral statements are organized into 11 categories; however, for the purposes of this study, participants responded to three sections of the PIMRS related to the dimension of Managing the Instructional Program within the instructional leadership framework of Hallinger and Murphy (1985): Supervising and Evaluating Instruction, Coordinating Curriculum, and Monitoring Student Progress. Having participants respond only to these three sections of the scale simplified the survey to encourage more participation by focusing responses and results to answer specific research questions for this study in regard to instructional leadership practices. In this

abbreviated version, participants responded to the selected 26 items using the following 5-point Likert scale: 1 represents Almost Never, 2 represents Seldom, 3 represents Sometimes, 4 represents Frequently, and 5 represents Almost Always.

The third section of the survey assessed leadership self-efficacy of school leaders with the School Leaders' Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES; Petridou et al., 2014). In the third section of the survey, the SLSES was used to measure leadership self-efficacy. Participants responded to this survey as a means of reflection upon their leadership capabilities, functions, and efficacy. The survey is composed of 31 statements related to school leadership and self-efficacy organized by eight factors: Creating an Appropriate Structure; Leading and Managing the Learning Organization; School Self-Evaluation for School Improvement; Developing a Positive Climate – Managing Conflicts; Evaluating Classroom Practices; Adhering to Community and Policy Demands; Monitoring Learning; and Leadership of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) – Developing Others. Participants responded to all 31 items using the following 5-point Likert scale: 1 represents Not at all Confident, 2 represents Not Confident, 3 represents Somewhat Confident, 4 represents Confident, and 5 represents Very Confident. While the survey captured the responses of participants' self-efficacy within these eight domains, the survey generated an overall self-efficacy score. The overall self-efficacy score was viewed as an individual's leadership self-efficacy and analyzed in regard to a school leader's instructional leadership practices.

The fourth section of the survey was an open-ended prompt where participants were asked to respond to a statement regarding influences on school improvement not represented in the survey. In the fourth section of the survey, participants were asked to respond to an open-ended prompt with the statement, "Elaborate on any topics covered in the survey and specifically

how supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress influence school improvement.” Including this response opportunity allowed participants to further develop their survey responses and to include other factors or influences to school improvement not necessarily captured by the survey on leadership self-efficacy or instructional leadership practices.

Data Collection

Prior to contacting potential participants and administering the survey, the researcher requested and received permission from the District Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Georgia Southern University IRB. Potential participants included school leaders (principals and assistant principals) serving public schools in southeastern Georgia and specifically within FDRESA. Contact with potential participants occurred through email as the survey was distributed electronically and on a one-time basis. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested a four-part request to survey in accordance with Salant and Dillman to include an advance notice alerting potential participants of the survey, a notice requesting participation in the survey, a follow-up notice approximately one week after the survey notice, and personalized contact to all non-respondents approximately three weeks after the survey notice. Considering these recommendations and in an effort to obtain a high rate of response, the researcher followed a four-part invitation to survey. First, the researcher sent a recruitment and advance information email (see Appendix B) to all potential participants explaining the details of the study and confirming correct contact information. Second, and one week following the recruitment and advance information email, the researcher sent an invitation to survey email (see Appendix C) to all participants requesting their participation in the survey. The invitation to survey email indicated the purpose and significance of the research, approval from IRB, anonymity assurance,

implied consent, and a link to the survey using Qualtrics™. The invitation to survey email clearly addressed that the survey was anonymous, of voluntary nature, and that no participant would be identified and no individual was required to respond. In addition, the invitation to survey email outlined the rights of the participant, including the right to opt out of the survey after having started their responses and the right to skip over questions during the survey. The invitation to survey email also addressed that if the survey or a question or portion of the survey caused any discomfort that the participant would be referred to the institution's counseling center. Additionally, the invitation to survey email addressed the risks for completing the survey are "no more than risks associated with daily life experiences." As a third contact and one week following the invitation the survey email, the researcher sent a reminder and follow up email (see Appendix D), reminding potential participants of the survey. The researcher made a fourth contact (see Appendix E) one week later as an additional reminder. This initial research was conducted over a four-week period, yet for the purposes of recruiting more responses and granting additional time for completion, the survey was extended an additional two weeks with a survey extension email (see Appendix F).

While the potential population included a total of 451 school leaders equating to 180 principals and 271 assistant principals, 343 school leaders, including 154 principals and 189 assistant principals, received the invitation to survey due to a variety of unpreventable circumstances such as unpublished email addresses, returned email addresses, and prevented participation by school districts. Of these, 108 individuals returned the survey; however, 8 only completed the demographic questions and were omitted from data analysis due to not completing the survey thereby yielding 100 participants with complete data. Yet, with 108 returned surveys,

a 31.5% response rate was reached exceeding the expected response rate of 25% - 30% of emailed surveys (Fincham, 2008).

Data Analysis

The researcher used quantitative survey methods supported by descriptive statistics and correlation measurement to examine the degree to which instructional leadership practices of school leaders predict leadership self-efficacy. These statistical means and measurements, as well as overall data analyses, were used to answer the overarching question and the corresponding research sub-questions. Within the survey, the researcher included an open-ended question, and this qualitative data was examined for patterns and trends related to quantitative data findings as well as the literature review.

The overarching and first research questions were answered by conducting an ordinary least squares regression (standard/simultaneous), with supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress serving as predictors and leadership self-efficacy serving as the criterion. The second research question was answered by conducting an independent samples *t*-test, with administrator type (principal, assistant principal) serving as the independent variable and self-efficacy serving as the outcome. The squared multiple correlation coefficient, R^2 , was used as the measure of effect for regression and Cohen's *d* for the *t*-test. Cohen (1988) provided the following interpretive guidelines for R^2 : .01-.24 as small; .25-.49 as medium; and $\geq .50$ as large; for *d*: .010-.499 as small; .500-.799 as medium; and $\geq .800$ as large. All data obtained met requisite statistical assumptions.

Qualitative data obtained from the open-ended question was coded. Coding for this study began with organizing and transcribing recorded answers. Specifically, the analytical process included (a) repeated review of the data, (b) the combining of similar codes into categories, (c)

identifying broad patterns across the data, resulting in themes, and (d) selection of the representative extracts to document the findings and support each selected theme (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Results from the descriptive and correlational analysis were presented in tables and charts. In addition to specific survey results, the researcher presented information on participants, including respondents and non-respondents and addressed response bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Demographic data as well as data related to instructional leadership practices from the PIMRS and data related to self-efficacy from the SLSES were presented with descriptive statistics and through correlational measurement and with total scale scores in tables for each instrument addressing each sub-section of the survey. The inclusion of descriptive statistics provided more information in regard to the survey participants, their instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy, and how their instructional leadership practices predict their leadership self-efficacy.

Chapter Summary

The researcher used this quantitative study with a cross-sectional survey design to examine leadership self-efficacy as predicted by the instructional leadership practices of school leaders. Data were collected online, and participants were public school leaders within southeastern Georgia. Findings from the study revealed the degree to which instructional leadership practices of school leaders predict leadership self-efficacy and were presented through descriptive statistics and correlational measurement in tables and charts. The intent of this research was to use data analysis and related discussion to inform professional learning development to assist principals and assistant principals in furthering their instructional leadership practices to attain school improvement.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

This research study was designed to identify and measure the instructional leadership practices, particularly practices related to daily teaching and learning, of school leaders and their leadership self-efficacy of their instructional leadership practices. The researcher viewed instructional leadership practices through the instructional leadership framework of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) where the general roles of principals are divided into three dimensions identified as defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate. For the purposes of this study, the researcher focused on the dimension of managing the instructional program in regard to the instructional leadership practices of school leaders, including both principals and assistant principals, and the dimension functions of supervising and evaluating curriculum, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. Likewise, the researcher viewed and measured leadership self-efficacy through the School Leaders' Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES). The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of the instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy of school leaders to determine the degree to which instructional leadership practices predict leadership self-efficacy. Additionally, the researcher saw an intended result of this study to be in finding strengths of school leaders as well as areas of improvement for the ultimate purpose of advancing professional practice and elevating school improvement.

This chapter will cover data collected to address research questions regarding school leaders and the degree to which their instructional leadership practices predict leadership self-efficacy. Additionally, this chapter will address the research design as well as research findings from data collected from the survey.

Research Questions

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate and gain a better understanding of instructional leadership practices and the degree to which these practices predict the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. Therefore, the overarching question guiding this study was: To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders predictive of leadership self-efficacy? More specifically, the study examined the relationship between instructional leadership practices and self-efficacy with the following sub-questions: 1. To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders related to supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress predictive of leadership self-efficacy?; and 2. What differences exist in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals?

Research Design

The intent of this quantitative study was to research leadership self-efficacy as predicted by the instructional leadership practices of school leaders. Selecting a survey method complemented the design of the study in researching both self-efficacy and instructional leadership practices, benefitted the researcher with a quick response rate for data collection, and assisted in data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, this study was conducted as a cross-sectional survey in that school leaders were invited to respond to this survey at one point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Potential participants in this survey were selected based on their school leadership assignments (principals and assistant principals) in public schools in southeastern Georgia, specifically schools within FDRESA, spanning 18 school districts and 180 schools and including a total of 100 participating principals and assistant principals. The survey instrumentation selected for this research was a modified instrument composed of four sections

(see Appendix A). The first section of the survey consisted of demographic questions collecting data from participants. The second section of the survey assessed the instructional leadership practices using Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). The third section of the survey assessed leadership self-efficacy with School Leaders' Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES; Petridou et al., 2014). The fourth section of the survey was an open-ended prompt where participants were asked to respond to a statement regarding influences on school improvement not represented in the survey. Prior to contacting participants and administering the survey, the researcher requested and received permission from the District Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Georgia Southern University IRB. Through email, potential participants were recruited, invited, and reminded to participate in the survey (see Appendices B – F). Additionally, potential participants were informed of the purpose and significance of the research, approval from IRB, anonymity assurance, implied consent, participant rights, notification that risks for completing the survey were “no more than risks associated with daily life experiences”, and a link to the survey using Qualtrics™.

While the potential population included a total of 451 school leaders, 343 school leaders received the invitation to survey due to a variety of unpreventable circumstances such as unpublished email addresses, returned email addresses, and disallowed participation by school districts. Of these, 108 individuals returned the survey; however, 8 only completed the demographic questions and were omitted from data analysis due to not completing the survey thereby yielding 100 participants with complete data. Yet, with 108 returned surveys, a 31.5% response rate was reached meeting the expected response rate of 25% - 30% of emailed surveys (Fincham, 2008).

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Of the 100 respondents to the survey, 52 were principals, equating to 52% of respondents, and 48 were assistant principals, equating to 48% of respondents. Respondents noted their current work setting or school level in the following categories: Pre-K or Elementary (grades P – 5); Middle (grades 6 – 8); High (grades 9 – 12); Other (other combination or special program not listed). 43%, or 43 respondents, answered as serving in the PreK or Elementary (grades P – 5) setting, 24%, or 24 respondents, from the Middle (grades 6 – 8) setting, 30%, or 30 respondents, from the High (grades 9 – 12) setting, and 3%, or 4 respondents, from the Other (other combination or special program not listed) setting. The survey requested participants identify their gender identity as male, female, or other/non-binary, and 64%, or 64 individuals, identified as female while 36%, or 36 individuals, identified as male. Participants also indicated their highest level of education as either Baccalaureate, Masters, Education Specialist, or Doctorate. Responses revealed that 14 individuals, equating to 14%, held a Masters while 55 individuals, equating to 55%, held an Education Specialist and 31 individuals, equating to 31%, held a Doctorate.

Findings

Overarching Research Question

With the purpose of this quantitative study as an investigation of instructional leadership practices and the degree to which these practices predict the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders, the overarching question guiding this study was: To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders predictive of leadership self-efficacy? The overarching research question was answered by conducting an ordinary least squares regression (standard/simultaneous), with supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress serving as predictors and leadership self-efficacy serving as the criterion. Table

1 outlines the correlation matrix of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy for the entire sample, both principals and assistant principals.

Table 1

Zero-Order Correlation Matrix of PIMRS Supervising and Evaluating Instruction, PIMRS Coordinating Curriculum, PIMRS Monitoring Student Progress, and SLSES for the Sample

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Supervising and Evaluating Instruction†	-	.49**	.30**	.53**
2. Coordinating Curriculum†		-	.74**	.62**
3. Monitoring Student Progress†			-	.58**
4. SLSES				-

$N = 100$

† Subscales of the PIMRS

The overarching research question was also answered with data as separate groups, with principals serving as one group and assistant principals as another group. Table 2 outlines a correlation matrix of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy for the separate groups of principals and assistant principals.

Table 2

Zero-Order Correlation Matrix of PIMRS Supervising and Evaluating Instruction, PIMRS Coordinating Curriculum, PIMRS Monitoring Student Progress, and SLSES by Group

Variable	1	2	3	4
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1. Supervising and Evaluating Instruction†	-	.58**	.58**	.66**
2. Coordinating Curriculum†	.46**	-	.75**	.59**
3. Monitoring Student Progress†	.04	.69**	-	.57**
4. SLSES	.32*	.64**	.56**	-

Note. Correlations above the diagonal are for principals and those below the diagonal are for assistant principals.

$N = 100$

** - Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1 – tailed).

* - Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1 – tailed).

Research Sub-Question 1

An additional and more specific question of the investigation of instructional leadership practices and the degree to which these practices predict the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders was: To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders related to supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress predictive of leadership self-efficacy? Results of the standard/simultaneous ordinary least squares regression for the entire sample of school leaders demonstrated that the combined predictors – PIMRS Supervising and Evaluating Instruction Subscale, PIMRS Coordinating Curriculum Subscale, PIMRS Monitoring Student Progress Subscale – significantly predicted SLSES, $F_{(3,83)} = 27.192$, $p < .0001$, $R^2 = .496$. PIMRS Supervising and Evaluating Instruction Subscale ($b = .324$ [CI_{95%} = .144, .504]; $\beta = .321$) and PIMRS Monitoring Student Progress Subscale ($b = .235$ [CI_{95%} = .054, .417]; $\beta = .302$) significantly positively predicted SLSES. More specifically, for every one unit increase in PIMRS Supervising and Evaluating Instruction Subscale, SLSES increases by $\beta = .321$ standard deviations. Likewise, for every one unit increase in PIMRS Monitoring Student

Progress Subscale, SLSES increases by $\beta = .302$ standard deviations. PIMRS Coordinating Curriculum Subscale was not a statistically significant predictor, $p = .064$. Table 1 outlines the correlation matrix of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy for the entire sample, both principals and assistant principals, while Table 2 outlines a correlation matrix of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy for the separate groups of principals and assistant principals.

Research Sub-Question 2

Leadership self-efficacy of school leaders was a significant part of this study. Therefore, a second and more specific sub question was: What differences exist in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals? This second research question was answered by conducting an independent samples t -test, with administrator type (principal, assistant principal) serving as the independent variable and self-efficacy serving as the outcome. Table 3 presents the self-efficacy scores for principals and assistant principals as well as for the subscales scores for PIMRS.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency Reliability Coefficients for the Subscales of the PIMRS and the SLSES

Variables	Principals		Assistant Principals		α
	(n=52)		(n=48)		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Supervising and Evaluating Instruction†	4.16	.56	4.10	.46	.87

Coordinating Curriculum†	4.24	.48	3.85	.69	.84
Monitoring Student Progress†	4.14	.54	3.69	.72	.86
SLSES	4.28	.54	4.04	.47	.97

$N = 88$

† Subscales of the PIMRS

Data were submitted to an independent samples *t*-test to ascertain differences in leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals. Principals and assistant principals served as the independent variables, and leadership self-efficacy served as the dependent variable. The results of the analysis demonstrated that there were statistically significant differences in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals, $t = 2.165$, $p = .033$, *Cohen's d* = 0.465, suggesting a small-approaching-medium effect size. (See table for means and standard deviations by group.)

Qualitative data obtained from the open-ended question were analyzed by coding specific phrases connected to school improvement as well as the instructional leadership practices included within the survey. Of the 29 valid responses, 12 responses (41%) stressed the importance of monitoring student progress as an instructional leadership practice leading to school improvement. Responses reiterated the significance monitoring had on student achievement as well as its vital role in driving instruction.

Chapter Summary

The focus of this study was the predictability of instructional leadership practices on the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals. For the purposes of this study, instructional leadership practices were viewed through the instructional leadership framework of Hallinger and Murphy (1985), specifically on those related to managing the instructional

program and identified as supervising and evaluating curriculum, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. Research questions were answered through analysis of data collected from a survey of school leaders within FDRESA of southeastern Georgia. Specifically, and in answer to the overarching question, instructional leadership practices of school leaders significantly predicted leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. Likewise, and in answer to the first research question, the instructional leadership practices of supervising and evaluating curriculum and monitoring student progress significantly predicted leadership self-efficacy, while the instructional leadership practice of coordinating curriculum was not a significant predictor of leadership self-efficacy. Additionally, and in answer to the second research question, leadership self-efficacy differed statistically significantly between principals and assistant principals. Also, qualitative data obtained from the open-ended question stressed the importance of monitoring student progress as an instructional leadership practice leading to school improvement.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Leadership determines the success and significance of an organization (Maxwell, 1993; Goolamally & Ahmad, 2014). Leadership is a key component of school improvement. As school leaders, both principals and assistant principals, exercise their instructional leadership practices, their decisions and actions directly connect to school improvement. With school improvement as a primary responsibility of principals and also shared by assistant principals, identifying and understanding instructional leadership practices that lead to school improvement is paramount. Additionally, a school leader needs to not only be aware of his/her impact through instructional leadership practices but also be engaged in self-reflection to understand his/her instructional leadership practices, leadership self-efficacy, and influence of their practices on his/her school outcomes. Understanding instructional leadership practices and their predictability of leadership self-efficacy presented a gap in literature, and conducting corresponding research was intended to reveal instructional leadership practices of school leaders and highlight their leadership self-efficacy while adding to the existing body of research. Therefore, a study focused on investigating instructional leadership practices of school leaders and their leadership self-efficacy was intended to identify strengths and areas for improvement through professional learning in regard to instructional leadership practices for the purposes of school leader skill development to attain school improvement.

This chapter will present a review of literature, methodology, and findings of this study on the degree to which instructional leadership practices predict leadership self-efficacy.

Additionally, this chapter will address discussion of results and implications for practice as well as recommendations for future research.

Review of Literature

Leadership of a school can be defined in a variety of ways and implemented through numerous models. Whether school leaders choose to lead by transformational leadership, distributed leadership, instructional leadership, or a combination, leadership practices influence schools. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) presented a framework of instructional leadership categorized by the dimensions of defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) defined instructional leadership as “the core responsibilities of principals that contribute to student learning” (p. 4). Hallinger and Murphy (2013) updated their definition of instructional leadership as “an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teacher learning” (p. 7). While school principals are the leaders who impact the direction of schools through their thinking, practices, and relationships, they are not the sole influencers of a school. The presence and support from individuals identified as assistant principals enable principals to meet school improvement goals through shared instructional leadership practices (Atkinson, 2013; Mercer, 2016). Viewing school leader (principal and assistant principal) decision and actions through a framework of instructional leadership practices related to mission, management, and climate focused the study on behaviors that lead to school improvement; therefore, instructional leadership served as the theoretical framework for this study.

Self-efficacy, or a belief in one’s abilities, initially emerged in the seminal research of Bandura (1977). Leadership self-efficacy is a more specific strain of self-efficacy and is defined

as “self-assessment of one’s perceived capability to organize and implement action required to effectively lead organizational change to achieve a performance outcome” (McBrayer et al., 2018, p. 603). Additionally, self-efficacy and leadership self-efficacy extended to the educational arena when reviewing the relationship between self-efficacy and school leaders and impacting school improvement (Cobanoglu & Yurek, 2018; DeWitt, 2017; Duran & Yildirim, 2017; Kelleher, 2016; Versland & Erickson, 2017).

Central to the idea of education is the evaluation of schools. The focus on school accountability increased as the importance of improved student achievement elevated in public expectation with the authorization of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and its reauthorizations in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Schools strive to meet accountability requirements through improvements in student achievement and school environment, viewed in the all-encompassing term of school improvement. School improvement leadership is defined as “an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate an evolving set of strategies toward improvements in teaching and learning” (Heck & Hallinger, 2009, p. 662). With leadership as a key component of school improvement, knowledge of a school leader’s instructional leadership practices influences the outcome of student achievement and directs school improvement, thus necessitating the importance of a principal engaging in self-reflection to understand his/her instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy to determine the influence of their practices upon their school outcomes.

Therefore, this research study was designed to identify and measure the instructional leadership practices, particularly practices related to daily teaching and learning, of school leaders and their leadership self-efficacy of their instructional leadership practices. Likewise, the

goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of the instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy of school leaders to determine the degree to which instructional leadership practices predict leadership self-efficacy. Additionally, the researcher noted an intended result of this study to be in finding strengths of school leaders as well as areas of improvement for the ultimate purpose of advancing professional practice and elevating school improvement.

Methodology

With the purpose of this quantitative study identified as an investigation into and better understanding of instructional leadership practices and the degree to which these practices predict the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders, the overarching question guiding this study was: To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders predictive of leadership self-efficacy? More specifically, the study examined the relationship between instructional leadership practices and self-efficacy with the following sub-questions: 1. To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders related to supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress predictive of leadership self-efficacy?; and 2. What differences exist in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals? These questions guided this study on instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy.

To investigate and better understand instructional leadership practices and the degree to which these practices predict the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders, the researcher selected a survey method in studying both instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy. The survey method allowed for a cross-sectional survey, benefitted the researcher with a quick response rate for data collection, and assisted in data analysis (Creswell & Creswell,

2018). Potential participants in the survey were selected based on their school leadership assignments (principals and assistant principals) in public schools in southeastern Georgia, specifically schools within FDRESA, spanning 18 school districts and 180 schools and including 451 principals and assistant principals.

To respond to the research questions, the researcher used a modified survey instrument composed of four sections (see Appendix A). The first section of the survey consisted of demographic questions collecting data from participants. The second section of the survey assessed the instructional leadership practices using Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). The third section of the survey assessed leadership self-efficacy with the School Leaders' Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES; Petridou et al., 2014). The fourth section of the survey was an open-ended prompt where participants were asked to respond to a statement regarding influences on school improvement not represented in the survey.

Findings

Results of quantitative survey methods were analyzed through descriptive statistics and correlation measurement to examine the degree to which instructional leadership practices of school leaders predict leadership self-efficacy. These statistical means and measurements, as well as an overall data analysis, were used to answer the overarching question and the corresponding sub-research questions.

To determine the degree instructional leadership practices are predictive of leadership self-efficacy and specifically the instructional leadership practices of supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress, an ordinary least squares regression (standard/simultaneous) was conducted with supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum,

and monitoring student progress serving as predictors and leadership self-efficacy serving as the criterion. This regression was calculated for the entire sample and also as a split sample where principals served as one group and assistant principals served as another group. Results of the standard/simultaneous ordinary least squares regression for the entire sample of school leaders demonstrated that the combined predictors – PIMRS Supervising and Evaluating Instruction Subscale, PIMRS Coordinating Curriculum Subscale, and PIMRS Monitoring Student Progress Subscale – significantly predicted SLSES. Additionally, the predictors PIMRS Supervising and Evaluating Instruction Subscale and PIMRS Monitoring Student Progress Subscale significantly positively predicted SLSES. PIMRS Coordinating Curriculum Subscale was not a statistically significant predictor.

To determine the differences in leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted with administrator type (principal, assistant principal) serving as the independent variable and self-efficacy serving as the outcome. Results indicated statistically significant differences in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals, specifically a small-approaching-medium effect size.

Of the 100 respondents to the survey, 52 were principals, equating to 52% of respondents, and 48 were assistant principals, equating to 48% of respondents. Respondents noted their current work setting or school level in the following categories: Pre-K or Elementary (grades P – 5); Middle (grades 6 – 8); High (grades 9 – 12); Other (other combination or special program not listed). 43%, or 43 respondents, answered as serving in the PreK or Elementary (grades P – 5) setting, 24%, or 24 respondents, from the Middle (grades 6 – 8) setting, 30%, or 30 respondents, from the High (grades 9 – 12) setting, and 3%, or 4 respondents, from the Other (other combination or special program not listed) setting. The survey requested respondents

identify their gender identity as male, female, or other/non-binary, and 64%, or 64 individuals, identified as female while 36%, or 36 individuals, identified as male. Respondents also indicated their highest level of education as either Baccalaureate, Masters, Education Specialist, or Doctorate. Responses revealed that 14 individuals, equating to 14%, held a Masters while 55 individuals, equating to 55%, held an Education Specialist and 31 individuals, equating to 31%, held a Doctorate.

Overarching Research Question

With the purpose of this quantitative study as an investigation of instructional leadership practices and the degree to which these practices predict the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders, the overarching question guiding this study was: To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders predictive of leadership self-efficacy? The overarching research question was answered by conducting an ordinary least squares regression (standard/simultaneous), with supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress serving as predictors and leadership self-efficacy serving as the criterion. Table 1 outlines the correlation matrix of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy for the entire sample, both principals and assistant principals.

The overarching research question was also answered with data as separate groups, with principals serving as one group and assistant principals as another group. Table 2 outlines a correlation matrix of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy for the separate groups of principals and assistant principals.

Research Sub-Question 1

An additional and more specific question of the investigation of instructional leadership practices and the degree to which these practices predict the leadership self-efficacy of school

leaders was: To what degree are instructional leadership practices of school leaders related to supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress predictive of leadership self-efficacy? Results of the standard/simultaneous ordinary least squares regression for the entire sample of school leaders demonstrated that the combined predictors – PIMRS Supervising and Evaluating Instruction Subscale, PIMRS Coordinating Curriculum Subscale, PIMRS Monitoring Student Progress Subscale – significantly predicted SLSES, $F_{(3,83)} = 27.192$, $p < .0001$, $R^2 = .496$. PIMRS Supervising and Evaluating Instruction Subscale ($b = .324$ [CI_{95%} = .144, .504]; $\beta = .321$) and PIMRS Monitoring Student Progress Subscale ($b = .235$ [CI_{95%} = .054, .417]; $\beta = .302$) significantly positively predicted SLSES. More specifically, for every one unit increase in PIMRS Supervising and Evaluating Instruction Subscale, SLSES increases by $\beta = .321$ standard deviations. Likewise, for every one unit increase in PIMRS Monitoring Student Progress Subscale, SLSES increases by $\beta = .302$ standard deviations. PIMRS Coordinating Curriculum Subscale was not a statistically significant predictor, $p = .064$. Table 1 outlines the correlation matrix of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy for the entire sample, both principals and assistant principals, while Table 2 outlines a correlation matrix of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy for the separate groups of principals and assistant principals.

Research Sub-Question 2

Leadership self-efficacy of school leaders was a significant part of this study. Therefore, a second and more specific sub question was: What differences exist in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals? This second research question was answered by conducting an independent samples *t*-test, with administrator type (principal, assistant principal) serving as the independent variable and self-efficacy serving as the outcome. Table 3 presents

the self-efficacy scores for principals and assistant principals as well as for the subscales scores for PIMRS. Data were submitted to an independent samples *t*-test to ascertain differences in leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals. Principals and assistant principals served as the independent variables, and leadership self-efficacy served as the dependent variable. The results of the analysis demonstrated that there were statistically significant differences in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals, $t = 2.165$, $p = .033$, *Cohen's d* = 0.465, suggesting a small-approaching-medium effect size. (See table for means and standard deviations by group.)

Qualitative data obtained from the open-ended question was analyzed by color coding specific phrases connected to school improvement as well as the instructional leadership practices included within the survey. Of the 29 valid responses, 12 responses (41%) stressed the importance of monitoring student progress as an instructional leadership practice leading to school improvement. Responses reiterated the significance monitoring had on student achievement as well as its vital role in driving instruction.

The focus of this study was the predictability of instructional leadership practices on the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals. For the purposes of this study, instructional leadership practices were viewed through the instructional leadership framework of Hallinger and Murphy (1985), specifically on those related to managing the instructional program and identified as supervising and evaluating curriculum, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. Research questions were answered through analysis of data collected from a survey of school leaders within FDRESA of southeastern Georgia. Specifically, and in answer to the overarching question, instructional leadership practices of school leaders significantly predicted leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. Likewise, and in answer to the

first research question, the instructional leadership practices of supervising and evaluating curriculum and monitoring student progress significantly predicted leadership self-efficacy, while the instructional leadership practice of coordinating curriculum was not a significant predictor of leadership self-efficacy. Additionally, and in answer to the second research question, leadership self-efficacy differed statistically significantly between principals and assistant principals. Also, qualitative data obtained from the open-ended question stressed the importance of monitoring student progress as an instructional leadership practice leading to school improvement.

Discussion

Findings from this study are intended to add to the existing body of research while also filling in gaps within the research as related to instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy. Results compare to those of previous studies and also reveal additional findings contributing to the discussion of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy.

As noted in the literature review, Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as “the strength of people’s convictions in their own effectiveness” (p. 193). This study looked at a more specific strain of self-efficacy, leadership self-efficacy, defined as “self-assessment of one’s perceived capability to organize and implement action required to effectively lead organizational change to achieve a performance outcome” (McBrayer et al., 2018, p. 603). Therefore, this study had school leaders self-assess their instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy to determine the degree instructional leadership practices predict their leadership self-efficacy. In effect, this study helped identify how well school leaders felt they performed in their job with instructional leadership practices. Responses from the full sample of school leaders, including principals and assistant principals, revealed instructional leadership practices of supervising and

evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress significantly predicted leadership self-efficacy ($F_{(3,83)} = 27.192, p < .0001, R^2 = .496$). More specifically, responses from the full sample revealed instructional leadership practices of supervising and evaluating instruction ($b = .324$ [$CI_{95\%} = .144, .504$]; $\beta = .321$) and monitoring student progress ($b = .235$ [$CI_{95\%} = .054, .417$]; $\beta = .302$) significantly positively predicted leadership self-efficacy. Findings indicated instructional leadership practices of school leaders predict their leadership self-efficacy, and differences exist in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals. More specifically, for every one unit increase in the area supervising and evaluating instruction, self-efficacy increases by $\beta = .321$ standard deviations. Likewise, for every one unit increase in monitoring student progress subscale, self-efficacy increases by $\beta = .302$ standard deviations. Additionally, there were statistically significant differences in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals, $t = 2.165, p = .033$. Specifically, these findings showed school leaders feel they are effective in their instructional leadership practices related to supervising and evaluating instruction and monitoring student progress. This finding aligns with existing leadership self-efficacy and principal leadership research. For example, leadership self-efficacy is connected to principals and linked to principal leadership efforts related to effective leadership and schools, school structure, and instruction (Kelleher, 2016). Additionally, principal self-efficacy and instructional leadership have a strong relationship and potential impact to student learning and school improvement (Hallinger et al., 2018). Likewise, belief and values of leaders, school improvement, principal instructional leadership and leader self-efficacy are also connected (Hallinger et al., 2018). In addition, modest to moderate connection exists between leader self-efficacy, leadership practices, and classroom and school conditions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). In a study on principal

instructional leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher professional learning, findings suggested a relationship between principal self-efficacy and an instructional leadership framework formed by numerous researchers and studies, describing instructional leadership as practices that improve the quality of teaching and learning with indirect effects on student learning and as practices that sustain school improvement by strengthening teacher capacity through professional learning (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Additionally, principal self-efficacy is linked to leadership efforts that influence teacher attitudes and behaviors as well as student achievement and the influence of instructional leadership on teacher self-efficacy and professional learning (Liu & Hallinger, 2018).

Existing research highlights the leadership self-efficacy of principals yet not specifically including individuals identifying as assistant principals. While principals, by title and position, serve as the individuals who provide the direction, influence, and support to the teachers, staff, and students, may often be considered the primary leaders of their schools, principals are not the sole influencers. Assistant principals share this role, and according to Mercer (2016) “are individuals that are close to the heart of instruction in most schools and affect a lot of change and assert a lot of grass roots leadership” (p. 89). Therefore, investigating the differences in the leadership self-efficacy between principals and assistant principals fills a gap in research literature. Results revealed statistically significant differences in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals.

Implications for Practice

This study provided valuable information regarding instructional leadership practices of school leaders and their leadership self-efficacy. School leaders, school district leaders, state school leaders, and corresponding policy makers may consider this information for reflection on

practice as well as professional learning for school leader skill development to attain school improvement. Results demonstrated instructional leadership practices of school leaders, specifically those related to managing the instructional program and identified as supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress, significantly predicted leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. Yet, when reviewing the functions of managing the instructional program separately, some differences were evident, particularly in that coordinating curriculum was not a statistically significant predictor. Additionally, research results revealed differences in the leadership self-efficacy of principals as compared to assistant principals. Therefore, implications exist for future actions aligned to instructional leadership practices and their leadership self-efficacy.

With the instructional leadership practice of supervising and evaluating instruction, the study revealed a significantly positive prediction to leadership self-efficacy. This instructional leadership practice can be considered a standard practice of school leaders. Within a framework of instructional leadership, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) described the function of supervising and evaluating instruction to include how principals provide instructional support to teachers through feedback regarding classroom visits specifically related to “school goals translated to classroom practice” (p. 222). The instructional leadership task of supervising and evaluating instruction is heavily evident within the observation and evaluation practices of school leaders within the study as related to Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), the Georgia-based evaluation system. With the comprehensive and monitored structure of TKES, school leaders have a method of supervising and evaluating instruction, thus connecting its positive prediction of this specific instructional leadership practice with leadership self-efficacy. In other words, school leaders are confident and feel effective in their abilities related to supervision and

evaluation, which can likely be attributed to the specific expectations and accountability set forth within TKES. A consideration for school leaders, school district leaders, state school leaders, and policy makers would be to continue professional learning related to TKES as it serves as a method of performing the instructional leadership practice of supervising and evaluating instruction to strengthen school leaders' skills, deepen their understanding of this instructional leadership practice, and influence student achievement to attain school improvement.

With the instructional leadership practice of monitoring student progress, the study revealed a significantly positive prediction to leadership self-efficacy. This instructional leadership practice can be considered a standard practice of school leaders. Within a framework of instructional leadership, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) identified a function of the Managing the Instructional Program dimension as monitoring student progress and referenced the importance to focus on both standardized and criterion-referenced assessments employed "to diagnose programmatic and student weaknesses, to evaluate the results of changes in the school's instructional program, and to make classroom assignments" (p. 222). The researchers furthered this idea to share how principals inform teachers of test data and analysis for comparison to and direction of school goals. The importance of this instructional leadership task is a clear focus with a school's accountability measure, the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI). Data reflected within CCRPI holds schools accountable to annual progress through reporting of yearly achievement performance with a highlight on student growth.

As a school leader attends to student academic and achievement performance through monitoring student progress, they are able to assess school needs and support teachers and students through school improvement initiatives, making a positive connection between monitoring student progress and leadership self-efficacy. In other words, school leaders are

confident and feel effective in their abilities related to monitoring student progress resulting from the focus and high accountability provided by CCRPI and related reports. A consideration for school leaders, school district leaders, state school leaders, and policy makers would be to continue professional learning related to the instructional leadership practice of monitoring student progress, including the monitoring tools within CCRPI, to strengthen school leaders' skills, deepen their practice understanding of this instructional leadership practice, and influence student achievement to attain school improvement.

With the instructional leadership practice of coordinating curriculum, the study revealed it as a significant predictor of leadership self-efficacy when grouped with the instructional leadership practices of supervising and evaluating instruction and monitoring student progress. However, when analyzing coordinating curriculum individually, the study showed it was not a statistically significant predictor of leadership self-efficacy. With coordinating the curriculum, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) described the importance of principals ensuring the alignment of curricular objectives to actual instruction and assessment as well as the "continuity in the curriculum across grade levels" (p. 222). While research reveals its importance, the instructional leadership practice of coordinating curriculum can be a time-consuming process that is complex and lacking structure. A consideration for school leaders, school district leaders, state school leaders, and policy makers would be to provide mechanisms for strengthening school leader involvement in coordinating curriculum to include time and personnel support systems, simplified structures, and professional learning. This in turn would elevate the importance of and enhance practice related to coordinating curriculum, deepen the understanding of this instructional leadership practice, and influence student achievement to attain school improvement.

The study revealed statistically significant differences in leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals. Data revealed a higher leadership self-efficacy within principals as compared to assistant principals. A consideration for school leaders, school district leaders, state school leaders, and policy makers would be to further study the causes and implications of this difference in an effort to provide professional learning to strengthen school leader practices and influence student achievement to attain school improvement.

Recommendations for Future Research

Findings from this study provided initial insight into instructional leadership practices of school leaders as well as their leadership self-efficacy in addition to the degree instructional leadership practices predicted leadership self-efficacy. Recommendations for future research involving instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy is warranted.

The population for this study included principals and assistant principals in public schools in southeastern Georgia, spanning 18 school districts and 180 schools and included participation from 52 principals and 48 assistant principals. In order to gain a larger population, future research could include additional schools in other areas, whether within the state, throughout the nation, or in other countries or locations. Expanding the reach of research would broaden the scope of the population to include factors influenced by other geographic reference points. An additional consideration to enlarge the population would also be to include other types of schools. Focusing this study on public schools generated results from the public setting, and including private schools could strengthen the understanding of instructional leadership practices and their prediction of leadership self-efficacy.

The researcher viewed instructional leadership practices through the instructional leadership framework of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) where the general roles of principals are

divided into three dimensions identified as defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate. For the purposes of this study, the researcher focused on the dimension of managing the instructional program in regard to the instructional leadership practices of school leaders, including both principals and assistant principals, and the dimension functions of supervising and evaluating curriculum, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the degree instructional leadership practices predict leadership self-efficacy, future research could include the dimensions of defining the school mission and promoting a positive learning climate. While focusing this study on the instructional leadership dimension of managing the instructional program simplified the research to be streamlined on school leader tasks of an instructional focus, expanding the research to include these additional instructional leadership dimensions could strengthen the understanding of instructional leadership practices and their prediction of leadership self-efficacy.

School leaders, both principals and assistant principals, served as the sample for this study, and data showed differences within the leadership self-efficacy of each group. A recommendation for future research would be a study into the differences within the instructional leadership practices of principals and assistant principals to gain a better understanding of leadership self-efficacy of each group as related to specific instructional leadership practices.

Within the survey, the researcher included an open-ended prompt where participants were asked to respond to a statement regarding influences on school improvement not represented in the survey. A recommendation for future research would be to include additional qualitative data to gain a better understanding of attaining school improvement through the instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy of school leaders.

Conclusion

According to results of this study, the instructional leadership practices of school leaders predict their leadership self-efficacy. As school leaders engage themselves in tasks impacting school improvement, they will feel effective in their responsibilities, decisions, and actions. Yet, differences exist in the leadership self-efficacy of principals and assistant principals. As school leaders continue to study instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy and strengthen their practices through professional learning, their leadership will develop, and the attainment of school improvement will be the outcome.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Survey

Instructional Leadership Practices and Leadership Self-Efficacy of School Leaders: Carter Akins

Start of Block: Please complete the following questions and statements.

If you agree to participate in this study, click on the arrows below to complete the survey.

If you do NOT agree to participate in this study, close this browser window at this time.

Page Break

Q1 Indicate your current role:

- Principal (1)
 - Assistant Principal (2)
-

Q2 Indicate your current work setting:

- Pre-K or Elementary (grades P - 5) (1)
 - Middle (grades 6 - 8) (2)
 - High (grades 9 - 12) (3)
 - Other (other combination or special program not listed) (4)
-

Q3 How many years of experience do you have in your current role, in whole or half year increments (ex. 9 or 9.5)? If less than one year, please indicate the closest half-year interval (i.e., 0.5 or 1).

Q4 What is your gender identity?

- Male (1)
 - Female (2)
 - Other/Non-Binary (4)
-

Q5 Indicate your highest level of education.

- Baccalaureate (1)
- Masters (2)
- Education Specialist (Ed.S.) (3)
- Doctorate (Ed.D. or Ph.D.) (4)

Page Break

Q6 In your current role, please indicate the extent to which you feel you have demonstrated the specific behavior during the past school year.

	Almost Never (1)	Seldom (2)	Sometimes (3)	Frequently (4)	Almost Always (5)
Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis (informal observations are unscheduled, last at least 5 min, and may or may not involve written feedback or a conference) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensure that the classroom objectives of teachers are consistent with the stated goals of the school (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet with teachers and aides to ensure that they are working toward the same objectives (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Review students work products when evaluating classroom instruction (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Evaluate teachers on academic objectives directly related to those of the school (5)



Point out specific strengths in teacher instructional practices in postobservation conferences (6)



Point out specific weaknesses in teacher instructional practices in postobservation conferences (7)



Note specific strengths of the teacher's instructional practices in written evaluations (8)



Note student time on-task in feedback to teachers after classroom observations (9)



Note specific instructional practices related to the stated classroom objectives in written evaluations (10)



Make clear who is responsible for coordinating the curriculum across grade levels (e.g., the principal, vice principal, or a teacher) (11)



Ensure that the school's academic goals are translated into common curricular objectives (12)



Draw the results of schoolwide testing when making curricular decisions (13)



Ensure that the objectives of special programs are coordinated with those of the regular classrooms (14)



Monitor the classroom curriculum to see that it covers the school's curricular objectives (15)



Assess the overlap between the school's curricular objectives and the achievement test(s) used for program evaluation (16)



Participate actively in the review and/or selection of curricular materials (17)



Meet individually with teachers to discuss student academic progress (18)



Discuss the item analysis of tests with the faculty to identify strengths and weaknesses in the instructional program (19)



Use test results to assess progress toward school goals (20)

Distribute test results in a timely fashion (21)

Inform teachers of the school's performance results in written form (e.g., in a memo or newsletter) (22)

Inform students of the school's performance results (23)

Identify students whose test results indicate a need for special instruction such as remediation or enrichment (24)

Develop or find the appropriate instructional program(s) for students whose test results indicate a need (25)

Q7 In your current role, please indicate how confident you are in each item.

	Not at All Confident (1)	Not Confident (2)	Somewhat Confident (3)	Confident (4)	Very Confident (5)
Making sound decisions based on professional, ethical, and legal principles (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing and organizing the school environment efficiently and effectively to ensure that it meets the needs of the curriculum (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing and organizing the school environment efficiently and effectively to ensure that it meets the needs of health and safety regulations (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing the schools financial and human resources effectively and efficiently to achieve the schools educational goals and priorities (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Creating and maintaining effective partnerships with parents, caregivers and other agencies to support and improve pupils' achievement and personal development (5)

Managing my own workload and that of others to allow an appropriate life work balance (6)

Cooperating and working with relevant agencies to ensure and protect the welfare of the children of my school (7)

Motivating my staff to work effectively and efficiently (8)

Taking appropriate action when performance (mine and my staffs') is unsatisfactory (9)

Adapting my leadership style according to the situation I am faced with (10)

Delegating management tasks to my staff appropriately (11)

Monitoring the implementation of management tasks I delegate to my staff (12)

Ensuring that learning is at the center of strategic planning and resource management (13)

Encouraging my staff to actively participate in decision making (14)

Developing school self-evaluation plans (15)

Implementing school self-evaluation plans (16)

Using school self-evaluation data to support school improvement projects (17)



Managing and resolving conflicts and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impact (18)



Developing a school climate which enables everyone to work collaboratively (share knowledge and understanding, celebrate success and accept responsibility for outcomes) (19)



Developing a collaborative climate between the school and external agencies (ministry, community, parents) (20)



Evaluating teacher performance through classroom observations (21)



Providing feedback to teachers on their performance following classroom observation (22)



Using research evidence to inform teaching and learning (23)



Ensuring that school practices comply with ministerial circulars and state policies (24)



Ensuring that school practices reflect community needs (25)



Explaining to staff and parents how the decisions in the school are related to state and national institutions and politics (26)



Systematically monitoring student performance (27)



Monitoring the effectiveness of classroom practice and promote its impact on student performance (28)



Effectively using the available school infrastructure to enhance student and staff learning (29)



Developing effective strategies for newly qualified staff induction and professional development (30)



Developing
effective
strategies for
staff
continuing
professional
development
(31)



Page Break

Q8 Please respond to the following statement:

Elaborate on any topics covered in the survey and specifically how supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress influence school improvement.

End of Block: Please complete the following questions and statements.

APPENDIX B

Recruitment and Advance Information Email

Dear School Leader,

My name is Carter Bran Akins, and I am a student of Georgia Southern University in the College of Education, Educational Leadership. I am leading a research project and quantitative study examining the instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. This project is in partial fulfillment of the requirements set forth by Georgia Southern University to earn a Doctorate in Educational Administration. You are receiving this email because I have learned you serve as a principal or assistant principal within public schools of southeastern Georgia and First District Regional Educational Agency (FDRESA). I would like to invite you to participate in this survey that will support my investigation of instructional leadership practices and the degree to which these practices predict the leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. In approximately one week, I will share an invitation to survey which will include additional information regarding the survey as well a link to the survey.

I would like to confirm your contact information and role as principal or assistant principal. If you are no longer serving in the role of principal or assistant principal, please let me know.

Thank you in advance for participating in this survey of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy.

Carter Akins

Student

Georgia Southern University

College of Education, Educational Leadership

APPENDIX C

Invitation to Survey Email

Dear School Leader,

I am leading a research project and quantitative study examining the instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. This project is in partial fulfillment of the requirements set forth by Georgia Southern University to earn a Doctorate in Educational Administration. I invite you to participate in this survey.

In this anonymous, online survey using Qualtrics™, you will be asked to respond to questions regarding your instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy. The survey is voluntary, and respondents have the choice to ask questions about the survey, skip over survey questions, or opt out of the survey. If you choose to participate, please complete the survey with the understanding that your completion serves as informed consent. The survey should be completed at one time and should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Participation in the survey has minimum risks, no more than those associated with daily life experiences, and data collected is anonymous and will be held confidential, only shared with my research committee (Georgia Southern University College of Education Dissertation Committee). All results will be compiled and presented as generalizable findings.

To complete the survey, please visit this link

https://georgiasouthern.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cXTBgNbYJMpgDVb. As the survey window is June 4 - 25, 2019, please submit answers to the survey by Tuesday, June 25, 2019.

As a participant, you have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the study, please contact me, Carter Akins, at ca00209@georgiasouthern.edu or my faculty advisory, Dr. Juilann Sergi McBrayer at jmcbayer@georgiasouthern.edu. If the survey or a question or a portion of the survey causes any discomfort, please contact Dr. McBrayer or me at the information above. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Georgia Southern University Office of Research Integrity at irb@georgiasouthern.edu. Regardless of your participation of the survey, please email me if you would like a summary of findings.

Thank you in advance for participating in this survey of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy.

Carter Akins

Student

Georgia Southern University

College of Education, Educational Leadership

APPENDIX D

Reminder and Follow Up Email

Dear School Leader,

Approximately one week ago, I shared the following email with you as an invitation to participate in a survey regarding a research project and quantitative study examining the instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. I am sending this email as a reminder of this invitation. Please see the full invitation below.

Thank you in advance for participating in this survey of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy.

If you have already completed the survey, I appreciate your participation.

Carter Akins

Student

Georgia Southern University

College of Education, Educational Leadership

(included original invitation to survey email)

APPENDIX E

Additional Reminder and Follow Up Email

Dear School Leader,

Approximately two weeks ago, I shared the following email with you as an invitation to participate in a survey regarding a research project and quantitative study examining the instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy of school leaders. If you have already completed the survey, I appreciate your participation. If you have not completed the survey, I wanted to follow up with you to remind you of this invitation and request for your participation. Please see the full invitation below.

Thank you in advance for participating in this survey of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy.

Carter Akins

Student

Georgia Southern University

College of Education, Educational Leadership

(included original invitation to survey email)

APPENDIX F

Survey Extension Email

Dear School Leader,

I send this email for two reasons. First, for individuals who have completed the survey described below, thank you! Secondly, for individuals who have not yet completed the survey, the survey window has been extended for two weeks for the purposes of recruiting more participants and of granting additional time for completion. Please see the full invitation below and know the survey window is open and has been extended for two additional weeks.

To complete the survey, please visit this link

https://georgiasouthern.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cXTBgNbYJMpgDVb.

Thank you in advance for participating in this survey of instructional leadership practices and leadership self-efficacy.

Carter Akins

Student

Georgia Southern University

College of Education, Educational Leadership

(included original invitation to survey email)