

EXPLORE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN CHINESE PROGRAM OF EKAMAI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN THAILAND

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Abstract: It is well known that language learning is always closely linked with surrounding environment. Beyond the influence of outer environment, students' autonomy is another vital aspect. Instructional leadership is predicated on the assumption that teachers and principals need to work together as colleagues to improve teaching and learning in school. Chinese is regarded as a third language in Thai international school, so Chinese learning is closely linked with students' autonomy and their social community circumstances. Principals take the lead in operative and professional endeavor, in the end it is the teachers who determine their success. Two very important strands of students' Chinese learning quality lie in self-agency of students (including academic self-efficacy, behavior self-control, and academic self-determination) and their relationship (teacher-student relationship, peer relationship, home-school relationship). Weiner's theory of Causal Attribution posits that an individuals' effort in their ability to manage their own learning will be predictive of their active participation in current learning, which will in turn be predictive of instructional leadership at school. In this study, Ekamai International School (EIS) selected Chinese language subject from elementary level diversity students as the sample of study to exam their current situation, namely, their interpersonal support and social relationship influence. This paper described a small-size validation study of a questionnaire to measure for primary level students. The original was first developed by researchers in America in 2005. It was slightly modified for the current study and completed by a sample of students (n=37) who selected Chinese class in EIS in Thailand. The modified questionnaire is composed of six parts (*Believe in me, My teacher, Take charge, My classmates, Following the class rules and Talk with my parents*) contain 41 items. The reliability analysis result manifests five of six parts is valid and reliable. The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients of *Take change* is .288, less than 0.6; it indicated the part of "Take change" has no reliability.

Keywords: Resilient Students, Self-Agency, Relationships, Instructional Leadership

Introduction

"Instructional leadership (IL) is predicated on the assumption that teachers and principals need to work together as colleagues to improve teaching and learning in schools." (Hoy, A. W. & Hoy, W. K., 2009, xvii) Recently, IL has increasing importance placed on academic standards and the need for schools to be accountable. Principals as instructional leader involve themselves in setting goals, allocating the instruction resources, managing the curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, and evaluating teachers. In short, "IL reflects those actions a principal takes to promote growth in student learning" (Flath, 1989). More recently, the definition of IL has been expanded to include deeper involvement in teaching and learning. Although principals take the lead in operative and professional endeavor, in the end it is the teachers who determine their success. Because the teacher is number-one determine of student learning, focusing on teachers and classroom instruction will give principals the greatest opportunity to influence student learning.

Ekamai International School (EIS) is an educational institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was founded in 1946. It was accredited by WASC (Western Association of School and Colleges, USA) in 1998.

Nowadays, EIS is composed of 4 sections: Primary (K-2), Elementary (G3-5), Middle School (G6-8), High School (G9-12).

EIS follows the California State Curriculum with Seventh-day Adventist principles. Thai Language and culture instruction is also provided. To meet the academic needs of its international students, it offers 5 study programs.

The Chinese language classes are offered in primary & elementary and high school in EIS. The Chinese language classes are defined as co-curriculum in their primary & elementary school (K-5) and selected subject in high school (G9-12). There is no Chinese language class in the middle school of EIS. Specially, although the Chinese language class is co-curriculum, the students who studied in K-5 should be all participated in Chinese language classroom. The Chinese language teacher team is composed of three native-speaking teachers in EIS. One teacher teaches in high school (G9-12). The other two teachers named Miss. Rachel and Mr. Wu, teach in K-5. Every class in K-5 was divided into two groups which were taught by Miss. Rachel and Mr. Wu respectively.

As a Christian school, great emphasis has been given to create a "prepared environment" at EIS, and within this orderly and structured environment,

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children are free to move about and make choices as part of their learning experience. Students of EIS composed of 25 different nationalities: 80% Thai, 5% Korean, 4% Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani & Nepali, 3% Taiwanese, 2% American & Europeans, 6% other nationalities. Student diversity is one of the key issues which language teachers faced. English language is communicative and learning language. Each student should grasp proficiency English in order to be suitable to international school teaching-learning environment, meanwhile 80% students come from Thailand, and Thai language as a native language is also concentrated on in EIS. Chinese language as the third language was taught to each student in K-5 in order to coordinate with preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century. Based on the student's family background, school & society language environment, the difficulty of learning Chinese is unavoidable for EIS' students. It is difficult for students to get help from parents & classmates, or Chinese practice in family or church. Classroom is unique place to learn and use Chinese. But they are resilient students according to their performance in other subject. Of course, it also

- To achieve a representative statement on current IL practice within the Chinese program
- To determine the level of commitment to Chinese language instruction
- To make specific recommendations and provide improvement strategies on how to improve instructional leadership of Chinese language subject.

Theoretical Framework

Most students live in the situation which was described in the picture (Figure 1): This figure apparently shows the student home range. In family cycle, they get along with parents and their sister or brother. Besides family, the place where children often go is classroom, i.e. school and church. From Figure 1, students usually get in touch with their parents and teachers, their friends and classmates, classroom & school and church. That is to say, there are three main relationships relevant to students: teacher-student relationships, peer relations and home-school relationships.

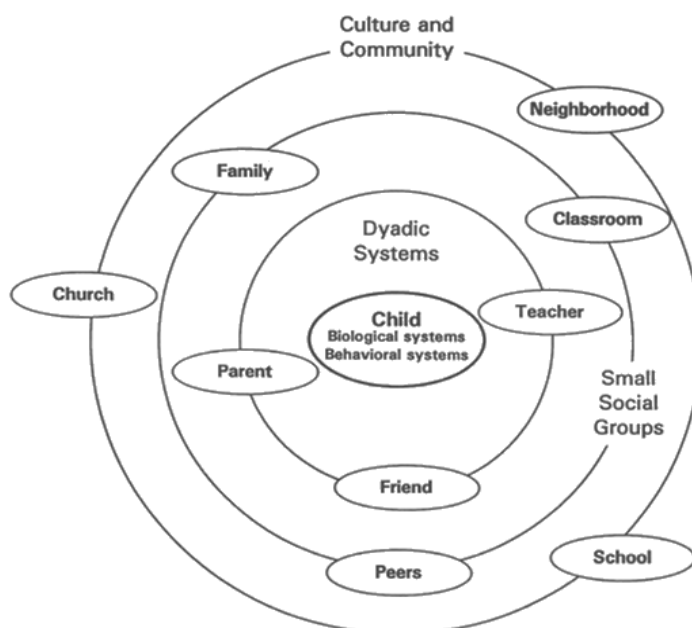


Figure 1: Context for Development
(Adapted from Pianta and Walsh (1996) and Sameroff (1989))

automatically becomes the challenge for teaching Chinese. Teachers and principal as instructional leaders in EIS must face to the challenge and deal with student diversity. Instructional leaders can't choose personalities or parents for their students; they can make effort on resilient classroom.

Objectives of the Study

In order to help define the scope of the feasibility, this study identified the following aims and objectives:

This small social community will influence students' learning interesting and inspiration, and encourage students to serves each other. It is well known that language learning is always closely linked with surrounding environment. Good language circumstance is benefit for students to communicate with each other and support one another.

Weiner's Theory of Causal Attribution

Beyond the influence of outer environment, student

autonomy is another vital aspect. When less help from surrounding people or environment, the language learning particularly needs support from effort themselves. Attribution theory was related to school learning by Bernard Weiner. In Table 1, the theory was shown clearly.

Table 1: Weiner’s Theory of Causal Attribution

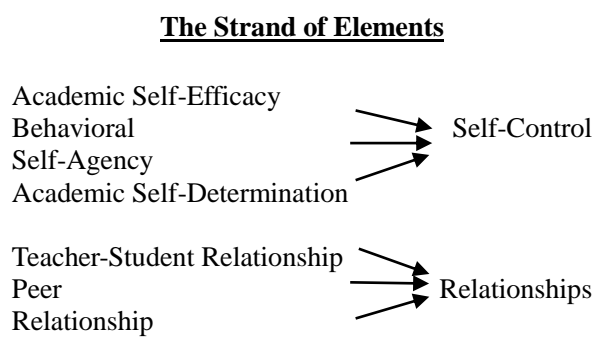
locus	Stability	
	stable	unstable
Internal	Ability(un-controlled)	Effort (controllable)
	Task work	
external	(un-controlled)	Lucky (un-controllable)

According to Weiner, most of the causes to which students attribute their successes or failures can be characterized in terms of three dimensions: locus, stability and responsibility. Locus is location of the cause internal and external to the person; stability means whether the cause stays same or can change, it shows by stable and unstable situation; responsibility means whether the person can control the cause. We can see that students’ ability is internal-stable-uncontrolled dimension, while their own effort is internal-unstable-controlled dimension. If the student failed in their study, the reason will be their low aptitude or study no hard. But the aptitude is not be controlled, while effort can be controlled. So diligence is always useful for learners’ achievement.

Resilience strands

About it, Dr. Beth Doll and her colleagues summarize into two strands of elements that bind students to their classroom communities. One strand emphasizes the self-agency of students---their capacity to set and pursue goals. The second strand emphasizes caring and connected relationships in the classroom and the school.

Table 2: The Strand of Elements Bind Students (Adapt From Hoy, A. W. & Hoy, W. K. (2009))



Academic self-efficacy means a belief in your own ability to learn is one of the most consistent

predictors of academic achievement. Behavioral self-control or student self-regulation is essential for a safe and orderly learning environment. Academic self-determination, namely, making choices, setting goals, following through. To build student self-agency and relationships, the two strands of resilience, use Doll et al.’s (2005) student questionnaire for gathering data about classrooms.

Research Approaches

Causal interview: Chatting with Chinese teachers and principal freely

Survey: The survey initially was conducted in EIS in December 2010 of grade 4-5 students. A copy of the questions used in questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4. Thirty-seven EIS’ students who were selected randomly were encouraged to complete the questionnaire. 18 questionnaires were finished by Miss Rachel’s classroom, 19 ones were finished by Mr. Wu’s. The casual interviews took place by chatting with two Chinese teachers and principal were informant.

Data Analysis

Individuals completed the questionnaire anonymously. After examining the responses of the survey, the reliability statistics of questionnaire was done by SPSS firstly, I want to be reassuring to all the answers are valid and authentic. See Table 3.

Table 3: Reliability Statistics

Scale: ALL VARIABLES			
case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	37	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	37	100.0

a. List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics		
	Cronbach’s Alpha	N of items
Believe in me	.824	8
My teacher	.796	7
Take charge	.288	8
My classmates	.852	6
Following the class rules	.873	6
Talk with my parents	.808	6

The questionnaire is composed of six parts contain 41 items. The parts are “believe in me, my teacher, take charge, my classmates, following the class rules and Talk with my parents” successively. The reliability analysis result manifests five of six part items is valid and reliable. The Cronbach’s Alpha

Coefficients of *Take charge* is .288, less than .6, it indicated “*Take charge*” part of questionnaire has no reliability. Now I have to reject the conclusion from TC part of questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed by Dr. Beth Doll, the situation took place, because the students probably don’t understand the meaning of questions, or probably give answers randomly.

At the same time, from the Figure 1, we can compare with two data, the mean of take charge(TM) and the mean of following the class rules (FCR). Maybe you will ask how to compare with them, because the mean of TM is an invalid datum. But you know, you also can get important information from the invalid datum, because the items of TM want to address the students’ academic self-determination, which means students who are self-determined are more motivated and committed to learning, and the items of FCR would like to address students’ behavior self-control. The data indicated the mean of FCR is less than that of TM, how student who aren’t follow orderly learning classroom can be more motivated and committed to learning! It obviously contradicts. So we can reason students would like to show their commitment to learning while the actual not. For student, they should be enhanced to Chinese learning, in regard to teacher, they should take teaching strategies to give more motivations to students.

teacher’s class and were finished by the student of teacher W and R. By the survey, we also want to find the difference in order that instructional leader would implement more appropriateness teaching and assessment strategies.

(See Figure 3 on the next page)

From Figure 3, we can find the two group students from the class of Mr. W and Miss R are almost same in the situation of “believe in me”. About 50% students sometimes believe in themselves have ability to learn Chinese; 7% students never have self-confidence when they meet Chinese-learning difficulties and are easy to pessimistic in academic prediction. Only about 24% students have a belief in their own ability to learn Chinese well, they normally are accurate in their Chinese learning prediction. Their self-efficacy will emerge when they tackle Chinese challenging and other students do the same.

(See Figure 4 on the next page)

The items of “My teacher” want to survey the teacher-student (T-S) relationships. There are seven aspects in this part as below: From figure3, we can find the percentage of “never” or “almost always” caring T-

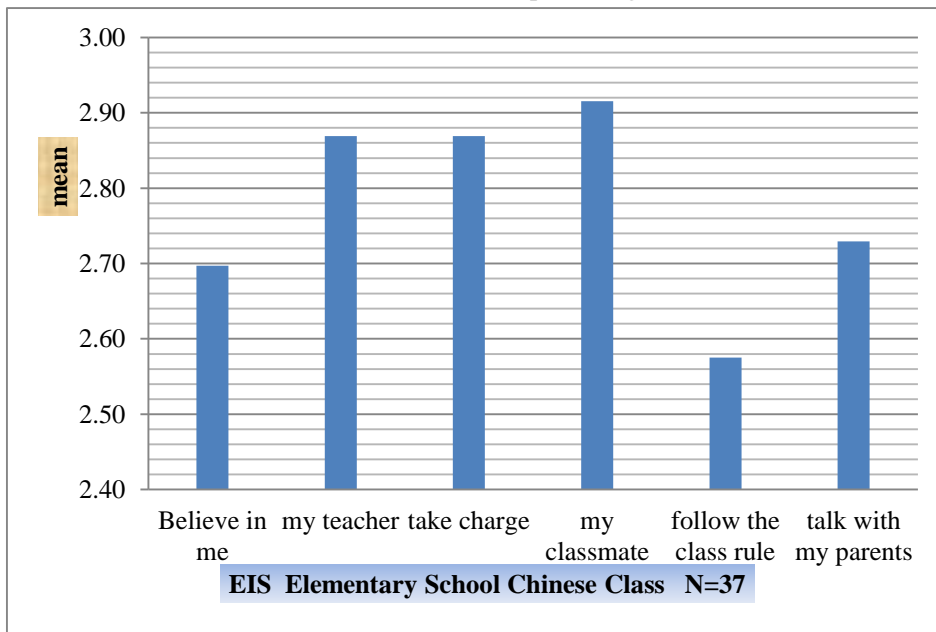


Figure 2: The Mean of EIS Elementary School Chinese Class

From Figure 2, all means indicted students is **often** “believe in me”, “follow the class rules”, **often** caring T-S relationship, peer relationship and home-school relationship. With respect to relationships, the student autonomy needs to be enhanced, specially class management.

Above 37 questionnaires were sampled from two

S relationship in W’s class are very close that in R’s, the data respectively are 5% and 40% or so. But there are some difference in “**sometimes**” & “**often**” caring T-S relationship.

(See Figure 4.1 on the next page)

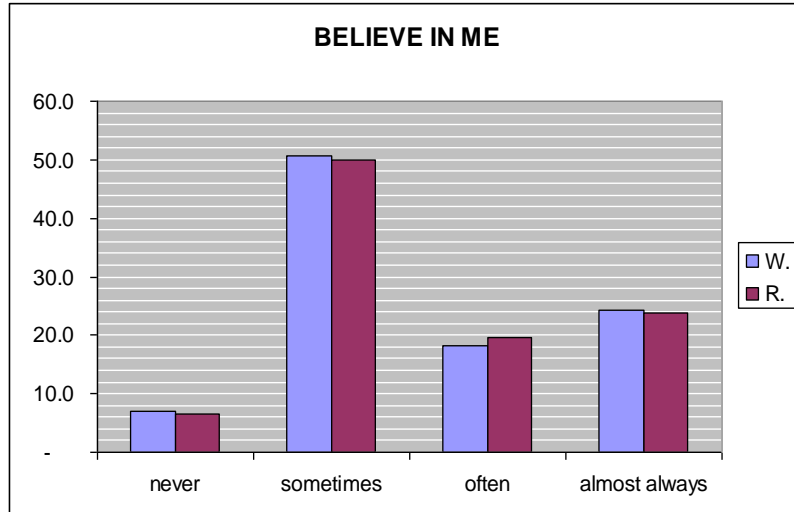


Figure 3: Believe in Me (BM)

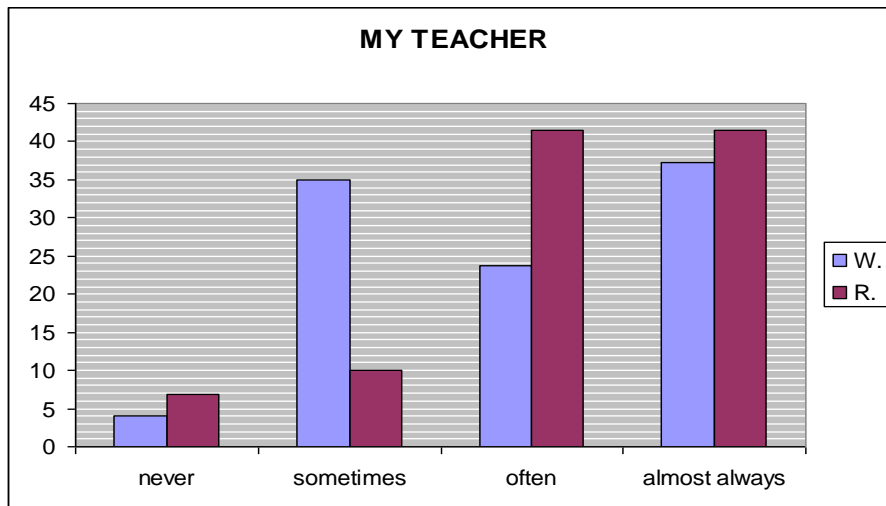


Figure 4: My Teacher

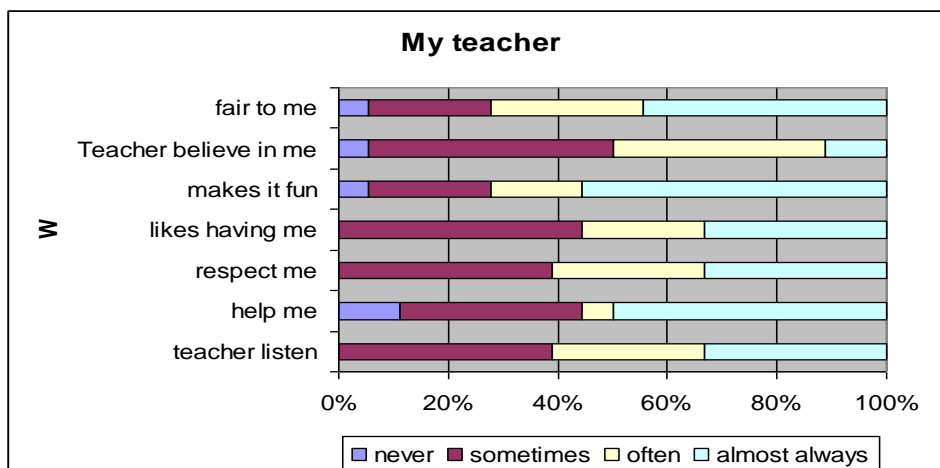


Figure 4.1: My Teacher (W)

In Figure 4.1, we can find clearly. The T-S relationships between W's thought their teacher **almost always** believe in them, while 42% student of R' class thought like that.

student just sometimes obey the class management. The collected data(see figures below) also shows when the teacher gives directions, Most kids in this class listen carefully when the teacher, 21% students never listen carefully in W's class, this situation never took

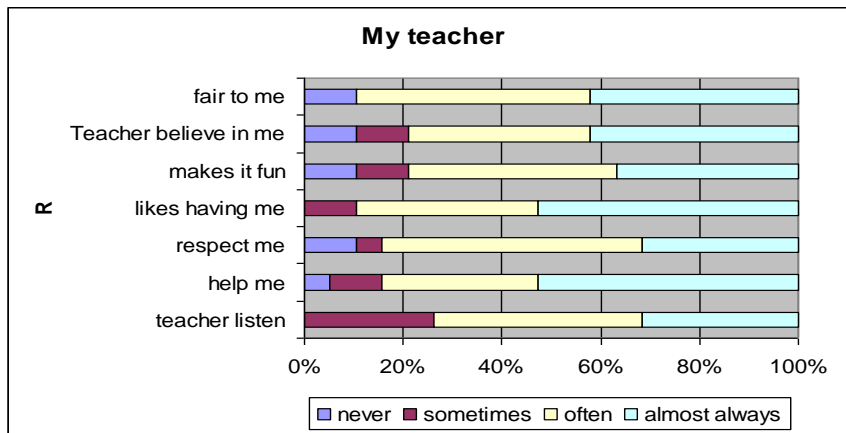


Figure 4.2: My Teacher (R)

No student of W's thought that their teacher **never** respect him/her, while 11% students of R's thought Miss R never respect them.

place in R's class.

(See Figure 6.1 on the next page)

Over 50% students felt Teacher W&R almost always help them when they need help. No student says their teacher never listens carefully to them when they talk, more than 30% student felt their teacher almost always listened like that way.

This part of survey want to know whether parents and kids talk about their grads, what kids learned in class, which way that kid can do it well in school, good things kids done and problem kids have. Especially, it

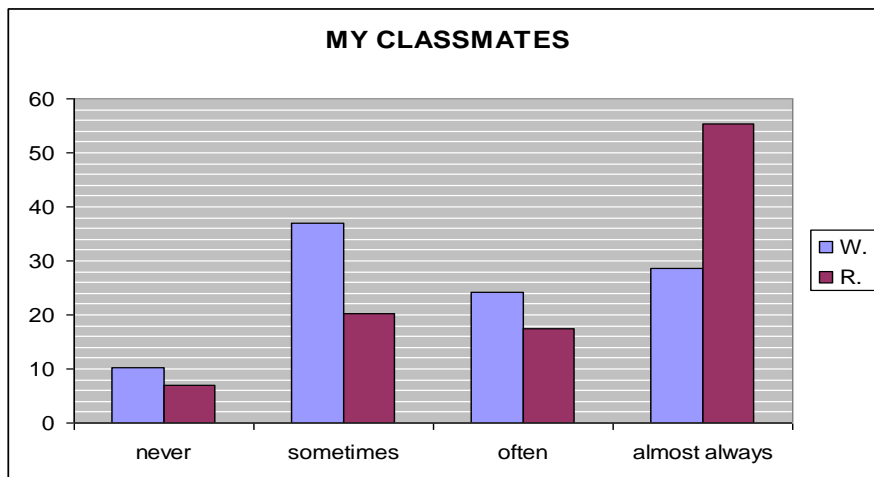


Figure 5: My Classmates

From Figure 5, it is obviously that the peer relations in R' class is better than that in W's class. 56% students in R' class always have good classmates relations, it is twice than W's.

wants to know whether parents help their kid with homework when they need it. From Figure 7, 50% students' parents of R's always talk about these with their child, they do care of it. But the percentage quick decreased in W's class, just 18% or so.

(See Figure 6 on the next page)

(See Figure 7 on the next page)

No matter what W's or R's students, 18% of them almost always following the class rules, 40%—45%

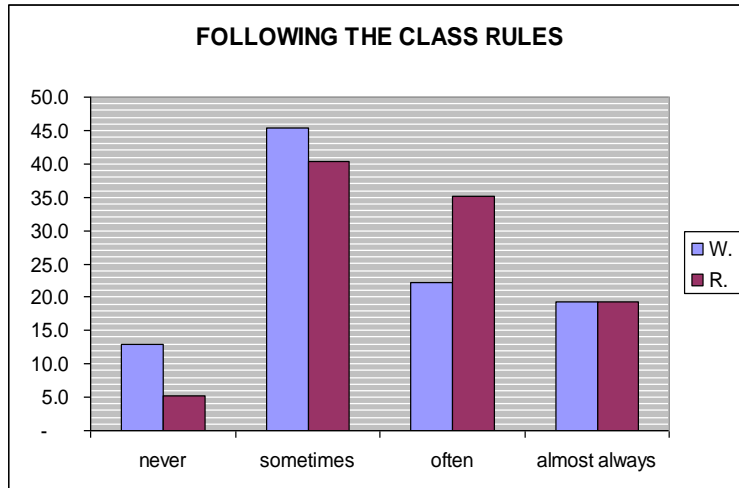


Figure 6: Following the Class Rules

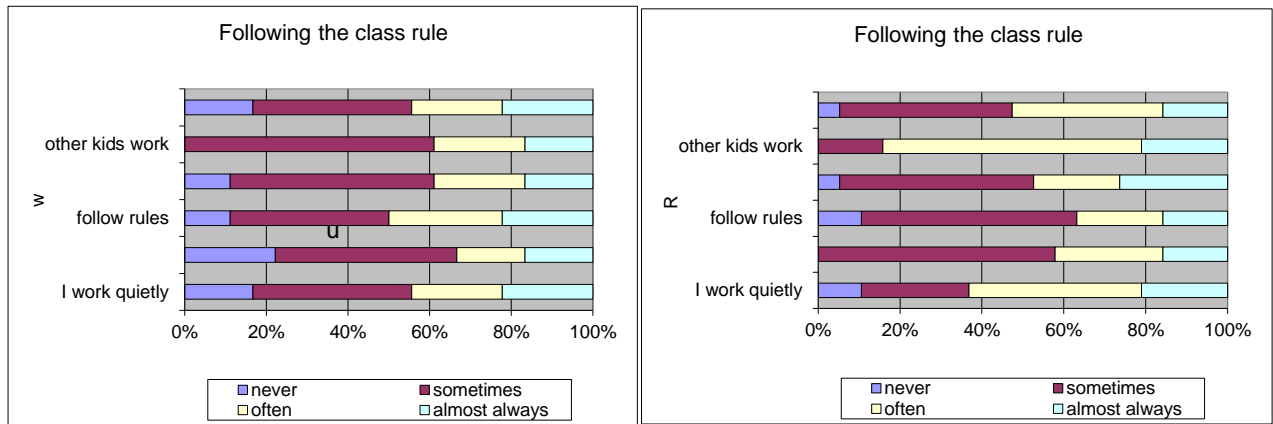


Figure 6.1: Following the Class Rules --W&R

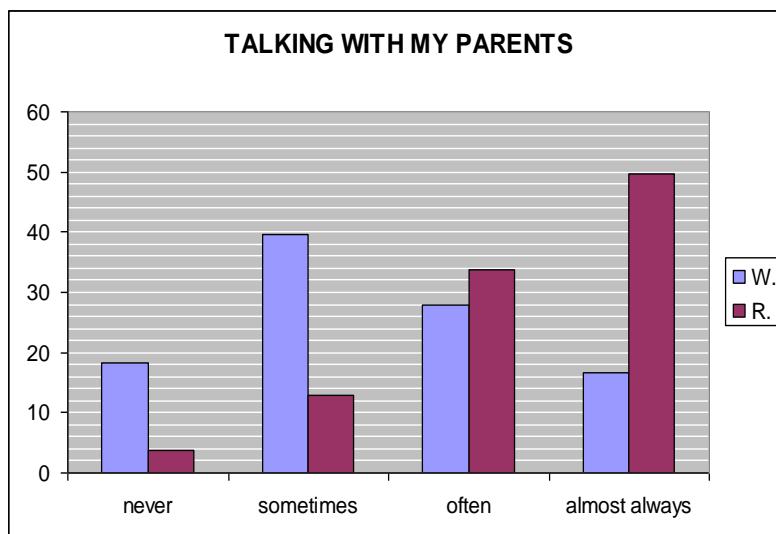


Figure 7: Talking with My Parents

Discuss and Recommendations

Hallinger and Murphy proposed model of Instructional Leadership (IL) which consists of 20 specific functions within three critical areas: (1) establishing the direction in which the school will go; (2) building capacity in people; (3) and developing a climate and culture that promotes teaching and learning.

According to this model, EIS have already created their vision, mission and goals, which present in chapter one; ESLOs provides academic standards, EPS monitors the effectiveness of English environment and practices. In chapter two, the data indicated the relationships between teach-student, peers, and home-school often was developed and maintained by EIS. Meanwhile, different level libraries make different students' needs and also provide abundant teaching resource to each school member. A lovely and neatly campus, being upgraded facilities, reasonable curriculum plan and orderly "prepared environment" that are working on to conducive to learning and improve this school. In one words, principal is devoting himself to effective instructional leadership.

Insofar as Chinese subject, it also emerged some issues in instructional leadership. I would like to begin the issue with a question as below:

Do instructional leaders set high expectations for their followers and themselves?

As we know, instructional leaders in this situation point to principal and two Chinese teachers, namely W and R. In fact, this question contains a series of questions, such as: Do principal set high expectation for students, teachers and himself? Do teachers set high expectations for students and themselves? If yes, how does principal develop teacher leaders? And how do teachers develop students? And so on.

By causal interview, I know that principal expected the primary students just can say "hello", "thank you" and other courtesy expression. For elementary students, he has no definite expectation. He just said "leading by teacher" and also emphasize teacher W and R are very good teachers (see appendix3). It follows that principal sets low expectation to students due to co-curriculum is not require and Chinese is the third language for students; meanwhile, he set high expectation to teachers because he do believe their Chinese teacher's capable enough to "leading by teacher", and also set high expectation to himself, in that, each k-5 student must have Chinese class even it is co-curriculum which means not require.

For teachers, they all follow principal's expectation; that is to say, principal's expectations became their student's Chinese learning outcomes standard. If all instructional leaders set low expectation to students, their student normally have low achievement. It isn't benefit for not only student

achievement but also teachers. Teachers would feel "no sense of accomplishment, no sense of satisfaction", and then lost their educational enthusiasm.

Facilitating communication

On the other hand, the principal sets high expectation to Chinese teacher. He expects them "leading" the elementary school Chinese Classroom, and hopes to develop teacher leaders. How to be an effective instructional leader? Whitaker (1997) identify four essential skills for IL. Effective instructional leader need to be resource provider, be instructional resources, be good communicators and create a visible presence. In other word, principal as an instructional leader must recognize teachers' desire to acknowledge and appreciated a job well done. He needs to communicate essential beliefs regarding learning. Teachers usually count on their principals as resources of information on current trends and effective instructional practice. They long for the support from principals, especially effective pedagogical strategies and assessment. *Creating a visible presence* just include focusing on learning objective, modeling behaviors of learning, and designing activities on instruction.

By communicating with teachers, one common issue was presented. There is once Chinese class each a week, sometimes it can be cancelled due to students' activity. Provided jump once class, the teacher will see their students in Chinese classroom again in half of month. Inherently difficult Chinese language will be more difficult to be taught. It is really difficult for non-native speaking student to learn Chinese in this situation. As teacher R mentioned, she had to lower her expectations without school and parents' support. She felt helplessness.

Create Instruction vision

Now, I can't help recommending create an instruction vision for school: *protecting instructional time in the school, dedicated class hour for dedicated course*. It is fit for not only Chinese subject but also the whole. There will be three benefits for EIS.

First at all, at EIS, great emphasis has been given to children who are free to move about and make choices as part of their learning experience. This vision will support it powerful, because it will respect and guarantee the privilege of students' learning choice-making.

Secondly, although principals take the lead in operative and professional endeavor, in the end it is the teachers who determine their success, because the teacher is number-one determine of student learning. This vision shows principal focused on teachers and classroom instruction and support every teacher who teach any subject, whether main subjects or co-curriculum subject.

Thirdly, vision is a long term orientation. As a principal, he should know it is not only a support, but also a pressure. “*Dedicated class hours for dedicated courses*” also means that teachers should make use of class hours effectively. Teachers should think what they will do in their dedicated course within the dedicated class hours; Administrators should consider how they can finish my activities without occupying the dedicated class hours; students should be told in the dedicated hours to have class on time and ask themselves what they learned from the dedicated time. Inter-facilitated will be working on in EIS. It will give principals the greatest opportunity to influence student learning.

The other common issue they mentioned is that some students always didn’t finish their homework on time. It refers to teaching issues, I will discuss it next.

Improvement teaching-learning strategy

When teachers worried about students who couldn’t do their homework, they always think how they can do for those students not grasped knowledge. Now we should consider it in another way, for the Chinese language class as the third language is a co-curriculum for kids, it is more important to let parents what content teachers taught and what extent kids need to reach by students’ homework. In other words, it implies teachers would like parental support; students need the involvement of their parents; teachers want the community to have a real understanding of Chinese instruction in school. By keeping focus on teaching and learning, you are sure to win the hand of parents and your community. The final goal is students’ achievement.

Whenever or wherever the teachers focus on teaching-learning, lesson plan is a number-one important thing. As we discussed before, “backward design” is fit for Chinese class. What content you want parents to know, then what knowledge you will teach kids. The further class design depends on many factors. As National Association of Elementary School Principals (2002, pp.6-7) defined, instructional leadership is six standards of what principals should know and be able to do. One of them is “using multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement”.

For this, survey result will be sources and support you to resort to suitable teaching strategies and plan students activities. According to data analysis result, I choose some as my sources:

- 1) 24% students have a belief in their own ability to learn Chinese well
- 2) No student of W’s thought that their teacher never respect him/her, while 11% students of R’s thought Miss R never respect them.
- 3) 11% student of W’s thought their teacher almost always believe in them, while 42%

student of R’ class thought like that.

- 4) 56% students in R’ class always have good classmates relations, it is twice than W’s.
- 5) 50% students’ parents of R’s always talk about these with their child, they do care of it. But the percentage quick decreased in W’s class, just 18% or so.
- 6) No matter what W’s or R’s students, 18% of them almost always following the class rules, 40%—45% student just sometimes obey the class management.

I summarize these six sources in a table.

Table 4: Sources of Data

		W	R
(kid) Believe in me	Always	.24	.24
(teacher) respect me	Never	0	.11
Believe in my students	Always	.11	.42
follow the class rule	Always	.18	.18
Good classmates relationship	Always	.28	.56
Parents talk with my homework	Always	.18	.50

From the table, it indicate most student low self-efficacy, they are low self-confidence. Only one fourth students have a belief themselves in Chinese-learning ability. It means “motivation” approach should be used. Because motivation is affected by the individual’s beliefs about the cause of success and failures and whether ability can improve; believing that effort can improve ability leads to greater persistence and achievement in school (Hoy, et al. pp.146). So the approach to motivation could be behavioral (eg. rewards), cognitive (eg. set high expectation), socio-cultural (engaged participation in learning communities). If the student was motivated by teaching-learning activities, it will improve Chinese language classroom management situation.

At the same time, individual suggestions are given to two different teachers. Although both of them need to use motivation approach, they should resort to different teaching-learning activities due to the data resource. From the table, it also indicated teacher-student relationship in R’ class is better than that in W’s, but a little part of students who thought teacher never respected them need to be special cared of by teacher R, group activities be helpful to improve it. Peer relationship in W’s class is poorer than in R’s class, students’ individual poster or presentation will present their personality so as to motivate them learning Chinese; home-school relationship is also every poorer

in W's class than in R's, R can design homework which parents involve in, while W need design diversity assignment style in order to motivate both students and parents.

In a word, "interesting is the best teacher". It means how it feels to be motivated, to move energetically toward a goal. According to principal's expectation to elementary Chinese teachers, I talked R and W with the analysis and suggestion mentioned above, and advice and encourage them to write a lesson plan. They are all motivated by me, and write down. I am extremely happy, and modify it that attached them in my appendix.

Conclusion

This study has explored a range of issues across instructional leadership regarding principal and Chinese teachers of EIS. As an instructional leader, the principal of EIS have already realized to develop teacher leadership in Chinese program. He support elementary teacher to lead classroom themselves. Meanwhile, also as instructional leaders, the two Chinese teachers also tried their best to model Chinese language class. Miss. Rachel's educational background is about science, she is good at logical thinking. By continuously reflection, she began to creatively recompose teacher materials, and design diversity student activity to improvement instruction. Mr. Wu graduated from the Art of English. So he sufficiently makes use of his advantages, various resources, such as video, drawing, music, IT, which were integrated with Chinese culture in his Chinese class. They all enjoy the happy experience in instruction exploration.

Successful curriculum development is supported by kinds of factor. The first thing is to meet standard,

content standard, performance standard, assessment standard. For international school Chinese class, it is special important. As all my analysis above, parents will play an important role in the students' Chinese-learning. So we must communicate what standards are all about, how they focus instruction, and how they relate to assessment, promotion. We must help parents understand how they can help their children meet the standard. Of course, it more directly guides teacher teaching and influences student achievement. This issue should be emphasized on by EIS.

Hopkins stated the instructional leader's display one of characteristics was "commitment to promoting enquiry, particularly into the 'how' rather than the 'what'", it is suggested by their experience of facilitating leadership within the IQEA school improvement project (Hopkins et al 1997, 2000). I wish what I did were a meaningful try.

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