Exploring Influencing Factors and Strategies for Enhancing Self-Efficacy in Higher Education Teachers: A Case Study of a College in Changzhou

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the influencing factors and proposes strategies for enhancing self-efficacy among higher education teachers, with a specific focus on one college in Changzhou, Jiangsu, China. Drawing on Bandura's self-efficacy theory, the paper examines personal, institutional, and environmental factors that contribute to teachers' self-efficacy. It also reviews existing literature on effective strategies such as professional development, mentorship programs, and feedback systems. The findings suggest that enhancing self-efficacy through tailored professional growth opportunities, peer mentorship, and constructive feedback can significantly improve teaching quality and outcomes. The paper concludes with implications for institutional policies at the case study college, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support systems to foster teacher self-efficacy in China's evolving educational landscape. Future research should empirically validate the proposed conceptual framework to further inform educational practices.

Keywords: self-efficacy, higher education teacher, environmental factors

I. INTRODUCTION

Self-efficacy, a concept rooted in Bandura's social cognitive theory, refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific outcomes (Bandura, 1997). In educational settings, teacher self-efficacy is crucial because it influences not only teachers' motivation, resilience, and commitment to teaching but also student learning outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to implement innovative teaching practices, manage their classrooms effectively, and inspire students to engage in the learning process (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Thus, self-efficacy is directly linked to teachers' ability to create positive educational environments and improve students' academic performance.

In higher education, the role of self-efficacy becomes even more significant due to the complex nature of teaching at this level. Higher education instructors often face challenges such as diverse student populations, increasing demands for research and publications, and pressure to adopt new technologies (Klassen et al., 2011). Teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy are better equipped to navigate these challenges, maintain high teaching standards, and contribute to student success (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Conversely, low self-efficacy can

lead to burnout, job dissatisfaction, and reduced teaching effectiveness (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004). Therefore, understanding the factors that enhance or diminish self-efficacy among higher education teachers is essential for improving the quality of education.

In China, the higher education system has undergone significant reforms and expansion in recent decades. The government's push for mass higher education and the emphasis on world-class universities has placed increased pressure on faculty members to perform at higher levels (Marginson, 2011). Chinese higher education teachers are expected to balance teaching, research, and service roles, often with limited institutional support (Li et al., 2019). As a result, issues such as job stress, work-life balance, and professional development opportunities play critical roles in shaping their self-efficacy.

Research has shown that Chinese higher education teachers' self-efficacy is influenced by both personal factors (e.g., years of experience, academic qualifications) and environmental factors (e.g., administrative support, student feedback) (Liu & Zhang, 2020). Enhancing self-efficacy among these teachers is crucial for fostering a culture of innovation, improving teaching quality, and ultimately driving student achievement in higher education institutions across China.

This conceptual paper focuses on a specific college in Changzhou, Jiangsu, China. Changzhou, a city known for its rapid economic growth and educational reforms, provides an ideal setting to explore how self-efficacy can be enhanced among higher education teachers. The selected college is representative of many Chinese institutions that face the challenge of balancing traditional teaching approaches with the growing demand for innovation and research excellence.

In this context, understanding the specific factors that influence the self-efficacy of teachers at this college is particularly important. These factors may include local educational policies, institutional support systems, and the socio-economic environment of Jiangsu province. By examining these variables, this paper aims to propose targeted strategies to improve teacher self-efficacy, with the ultimate goal of enhancing educational quality in this region.

Higher education teachers face a variety of challenges in maintaining and improving their self-efficacy, which can significantly impact their teaching performance and the overall educational experience for students. **Self-efficacy**, defined as a person's belief in their ability to achieve specific tasks or goals (Bandura, 1997), plays a critical role in teachers' motivation, teaching strategies, and willingness to engage in professional development (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Despite its importance, several challenges inhibit the ability of higher education teachers to sustain high levels of self-efficacy.

One major challenge is **workload and time pressure**, often associated with heavy teaching loads, administrative responsibilities, and the need to conduct research. These competing demands reduce the time and energy available for teachers to reflect on their practices and improve their instructional techniques (Chang & Edwards, 2015). This situation can lead to burnout, which negatively affects their sense of self-efficacy, as they may begin to doubt their competence and effectiveness as educators (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Another challenge is the **lack of institutional support**. In many cases, higher education institutions may not provide adequate professional development opportunities or mentorship programs, which are crucial for fostering teacher growth and confidence (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Without these resources, teachers might struggle to stay updated with pedagogical advancements and innovative teaching methods, further diminishing their self-efficacy (Guo, Justice, Sawyer, & Tompkins, 2011).

Moreover, **changing student expectations** and the increasing use of technology in classrooms add another layer of complexity. Teachers may find it difficult to adapt to new teaching modalities, especially if they lack adequate training, which can further erode their confidence (Feldman & Tung, 2020). The pressure to meet diverse student needs in an ever-evolving educational landscape can also cause self-doubt, as teachers may feel ill-equipped to address the varying learning styles and demands of their students (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

Despite the recognition of these challenges, there is a lack of comprehensive research that specifically addresses the factors influencing higher education teachers' self-efficacy and the strategies for its enhancement. While several studies have explored teacher self-efficacy in K-12 settings, fewer studies focus on higher education contexts, particularly in non-Western settings such as China (Yu, 2021). Additionally, much of the existing literature emphasizes factors like classroom management or student engagement, but there is less emphasis on the broader institutional and social factors that could influence teachers' self-efficacy (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Furthermore, there is limited empirical research that tests strategies to enhance self-efficacy within specific higher education institutions.

This paper aims to address this gap by examining the unique factors that influence higher education teachers' self-efficacy in China, using a case study of a college in Changzhou, Jiangsu. It also proposes potential strategies for enhancing teacher self-efficacy in this context, thereby contributing to the development of more targeted interventions for improving teaching outcomes.

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to explore the factors that influence the self-efficacy of higher education teachers and propose strategies to enhance it. Teacher self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's abilities to effectively perform teaching tasks, which directly impacts student outcomes and overall teaching quality (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). In recent years, scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of self-efficacy in the educational domain, particularly within higher education, where teachers face evolving challenges like rapid technological changes and shifting student expectations (Mulyani et al., 2020).

Given the critical role of self-efficacy in shaping teacher performance and well-being, this study focuses on identifying key factors that either facilitate or hinder the development of self-efficacy in higher education teachers. The study also seeks to provide insights into practical and institutional strategies that can be implemented to enhance self-efficacy, thus fostering a more productive and supportive educational environment. This is particularly important in China, where educational reforms and higher expectations from students have created unique pressures on higher education teachers (Yuan et al., 2021).

Research Questions

To guide this exploration, the study poses two primary research questions:

1. **What are the key factors influencing the self-efficacy of higher education teachers?**

Research has shown that self-efficacy in higher education is shaped by several factors, including personal attributes, institutional support, and the socio-cultural environment. Personal factors such as a teacher's experience, pedagogical knowledge, and ability to engage students are crucial in determining their self-efficacy (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Additionally, institutional support, such as professional development programs, access to resources, and constructive feedback, significantly impacts a teacher's confidence in their abilities (Chesnut & Burley, 2015). Socio-cultural factors, including student attitudes, peer collaboration, and administrative support, also play a role in shaping self-efficacy (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Understanding these factors can help identify the main challenges and opportunities for enhancing self-efficacy in the educational context of higher education.

2. **What strategies can be employed to enhance their self-efficacy?**

Various strategies can be employed to enhance teacher self-efficacy, including mentorship programs, continuous professional development, and the integration of feedback mechanisms. Mentorship, particularly peer mentorship, allows less experienced teachers to learn from their colleagues, thereby increasing their confidence and teaching effectiveness (Frye, Button, & Kelly, 2020). Additionally, professional development programs that focus on skill-building, new pedagogical techniques, and digital literacy have been shown to boost teachers' sense of self-efficacy (Moolenaar, Daly, & Sleegers, 2010). Lastly, fostering a culture of constructive feedback and collaboration can help teachers refine their practices and build self-assurance in their instructional methods (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Teacher self-efficacy has been widely recognized as a crucial factor in enhancing teaching performance, student outcomes, and overall educational quality (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). In higher education, where teachers face increasing pressure to meet diverse student needs, adapt to technological advancements, and contribute to research, understanding and improving self-efficacy has become even more critical. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on teacher self-efficacy by focusing on a higher education context in China, a rapidly developing country with distinct educational challenges and reforms.

China's education system, especially at the higher education level, is undergoing significant transformation, with the government's focus on internationalization and improving teaching quality to remain competitive on a global scale (Wang & Lin, 2022). As higher education institutions in China experience reforms aimed at modernizing the curriculum and pedagogy, teachers' self-efficacy plays a vital role in ensuring these reforms are effectively implemented (Zhang, 2021). Higher education teachers who possess high self-efficacy are more likely to adopt innovative teaching methods, engage students more effectively, and contribute to institutional improvement (Chen & Wang, 2023).

This conceptual paper contributes to the academic discourse on teacher self-efficacy in three primary ways. First, it focuses on the unique context of Chinese higher education, where rapid modernization meets traditional teaching practices. While much research has been conducted in Western contexts, fewer studies have addressed the dynamics of teacher self-efficacy in China, especially in response to recent reforms (Zhou et al., 2022). By

examining a specific case study from Changzhou, Jiangsu, this paper adds localized insights that can inform broader educational strategies in China.

Second, this paper provides a theoretical exploration of the factors influencing higher education teachers' self-efficacy, drawing on both global literature and the specific socio-cultural context of China. In doing so, it helps bridge the gap between general theories of self-efficacy and their application in non-Western, rapidly evolving educational systems (Wang & Zhu, 2021). This exploration can guide further empirical research into how institutional factors, professional development, and teacher support systems can be designed to enhance teacher efficacy in diverse settings.

Finally, this study proposes practical strategies for enhancing teacher self-efficacy, providing a roadmap for educational institutions in China and beyond to improve teaching effectiveness. By emphasizing context-specific strategies such as mentorship, institutional support, and feedback mechanisms, the paper offers actionable recommendations that can contribute to ongoing discussions on educational quality improvement (Gao & Li, 2023).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Self-Efficacy Theory

Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory, developed in 1977, is a foundational concept in social cognitive theory, describing self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish tasks. These beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and behave. According to Bandura, individuals with high self-efficacy view challenges as tasks to be mastered, while those with low self-efficacy may avoid difficult tasks and focus on personal shortcomings. Self-efficacy develops through four main sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. Success in past experiences (mastery), observing others (vicarious experiences), encouragement from others (verbal persuasion), and one's mood or stress level (physiological states) all contribute to a person's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

In educational contexts, Bandura's theory has been widely applied, especially to understand teachers' self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy refers to a teacher's belief in their ability to promote learning and manage classrooms effectively. High self-efficacy among teachers has been linked to greater enthusiasm, persistence in facing challenges, and higher student achievement. Teachers with strong self-efficacy are more likely to implement innovative teaching methods, engage students in active learning, and create a positive classroom environment (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers develop their self-efficacy through mastery of classroom challenges, observing successful peers, receiving positive feedback, and maintaining a balanced emotional state (Klassen & Durksen, 2014). For example, mentoring programs, professional development, and positive feedback from colleagues and administrators have been found to increase teacher self-efficacy (Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015).

Recent research underscores the importance of teacher self-efficacy in higher education. University instructors with high self-efficacy are more likely to adopt student-centered teaching approaches and adjust to

challenging situations, such as the recent shift to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies show that instructors with high self-efficacy adapted more easily to online platforms and were more confident in maintaining student engagement (Han & Wang, 2021). Additionally, high self-efficacy among teachers is linked to increased satisfaction, greater resilience, and a better learning environment for students. In higher education, this belief in one's abilities plays a critical role in the adoption of collaborative and innovative teaching strategies (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, & Nevgi, 2008).

Bandura's self-efficacy theory continues to be highly relevant in educational contexts, particularly for teachers. Teachers with high self-efficacy are crucial for fostering student success, adopting innovative teaching practices, and creating supportive learning environments. Enhancing teacher self-efficacy through professional development, peer observation, and institutional support is vital for improving the quality of education in today's rapidly evolving academic landscape.

B. Self-Efficacy in Higher Education

Self-efficacy, as originally proposed by Bandura (1997), refers to individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to organize and execute the actions required to achieve specific performances. In the context of higher education, teacher self-efficacy is critically linked to teaching effectiveness, student engagement, and overall educational quality (Klassen et al., 2011). Higher education teachers with high self-efficacy tend to demonstrate greater persistence, adaptability, and resilience in their teaching roles, which in turn positively impacts student learning outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Globally, numerous studies have highlighted the significance of self-efficacy in teaching, focusing on various aspects such as instructional practices, classroom management, and student engagement (Klassen et al., 2011; Zee & Koomen, 2016). For instance, Klassen et al. (2011) conducted a cross-national study, examining teacher self-efficacy in five countries, including the UK, Canada, Cyprus, Korea, and the USA. Their findings demonstrated that self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by cultural contexts, teaching environments, and access to professional development. Teachers in contexts where they receive institutional support, resources, and opportunities for growth report higher levels of self-efficacy (Klassen et al., 2011).

Moreover, research by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) found that self-efficacy in teachers is closely associated with job satisfaction and burnout. Teachers with higher self-efficacy were less likely to experience emotional exhaustion and were more likely to feel satisfied with their work. This relationship underscores the importance of fostering self-efficacy not only for teaching effectiveness but also for the well-being of educators themselves.

In a meta-analysis by Zee and Koomen (2016), the authors reviewed over 40 studies on teacher self-efficacy, concluding that teachers with higher self-efficacy beliefs were more effective in promoting positive student outcomes. This effectiveness was largely due to the teachers' enhanced ability to manage classrooms, engage students, and deliver instructional content in a way that facilitates understanding and retention.

In the Chinese context, research on self-efficacy among higher education teachers has been growing in recent years, as the country continues to reform its educational system. Self-efficacy is viewed as a key factor influencing both teacher performance and educational reform efforts. A study by Wang et al. (2017) explored self-efficacy

among university teachers in China and found that teachers with higher self-efficacy were more adaptable to changes in educational policies and more likely to adopt innovative teaching methods.

Wang and Zhang (2019) examined the self-efficacy of Chinese higher education teachers and discovered that professional development and institutional support played a significant role in enhancing self-efficacy. The study emphasized that teachers in well-supported environments, where professional growth was encouraged, were more confident in their teaching abilities. Similarly, Liu et al. (2020) found that self-efficacy among Chinese university teachers was positively correlated with teaching satisfaction and motivation to engage in student-centered teaching practices.

However, challenges remain. The highly competitive and hierarchical nature of China's academic system can negatively impact teacher self-efficacy. Gao and Wang (2020) highlighted the pressure for research output and the demands for administrative duties as factors that reduce the time and energy teachers can dedicate to improving their teaching practices, thereby undermining their self-efficacy.

While there are similarities in the factors that influence teacher self-efficacy globally and in China—such as the importance of institutional support and professional development—there are also significant differences driven by cultural and systemic factors. In China, the Confucian heritage of respect for authority and hierarchical structures in educational institutions can sometimes limit the autonomy teachers feel they have in their teaching roles, thereby affecting their self-efficacy (Liu & Meng, 2019).

Recent studies suggest that as China moves toward more student-centered and innovative educational practices, there is an increasing emphasis on developing teachers' self-efficacy (Wang et al., 2021). For instance, policy reforms encouraging innovative teaching methods, such as blended learning and problem-based learning, require teachers to have high self-efficacy to adopt and integrate these practices effectively (Xu & Guo, 2022). However, the pressure to balance these new teaching demands with research output continues to be a major challenge for many Chinese university teachers.

The growing body of research on teacher self-efficacy, both globally and in China, highlights the central role of self-efficacy in enhancing teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. In China, where higher education is undergoing significant reforms, fostering teacher self-efficacy is crucial for implementing innovative teaching practices and improving educational quality. However, balancing the demands of research, teaching, and administrative duties remains a key challenge that institutions need to address to support their faculty's self-efficacy and overall performance.

C. Factors Influencing Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy, which refers to an educator's belief in their ability to effectively teach and influence student learning outcomes, is influenced by a variety of factors within the higher education context. One of the most significant factors is institutional support. Research indicates that when higher education institutions provide robust administrative backing, access to resources, and a collaborative work environment, teachers experience enhanced self-efficacy (Hoy & Spero, 2005). Institutional support, whether through leadership encouragement or the provision of infrastructure, fosters a positive teaching environment. Mentorship programs

and academic research support also contribute to a stronger sense of competency (Torres, 2019). Recent studies, such as Kim and Jang's (2021), confirm that consistent administrative support, particularly during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic, significantly boosts teachers' self-efficacy.

Another critical factor is professional development opportunities. According to Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, mastery experiences—where educators succeed in teaching challenges—are pivotal in shaping their belief in their capabilities. Teachers who engage in professional development programs gain new pedagogical skills and teaching strategies, which directly contribute to higher self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Research by Schwab et al. (2022) further illustrates that continuous professional development, especially in adapting to digital teaching environments, improves teachers' self-efficacy, highlighting its relevance in today's rapidly evolving educational landscape.

The workload of teachers also plays a vital role in influencing their self-efficacy. Teachers who face excessive workloads, with numerous administrative tasks or large classes, often experience burnout, which undermines their confidence and sense of effectiveness (Hakanen et al., 2006). Conversely, manageable workloads that allow time for reflection and lesson preparation positively affect teachers' perceptions of their teaching efficacy (Betoret, 2006). Lauermann and König's (2022) recent study supports this, demonstrating that manageable workloads are associated with higher levels of self-efficacy and job satisfaction, while excessive demands lead to emotional exhaustion and diminished teaching effectiveness.

Student feedback is another essential contributor to teacher self-efficacy. Positive feedback from students reinforces teachers' beliefs in their teaching abilities, encouraging them to continue improving their pedagogical approaches (Klassen et al., 2011). Even constructive criticism can enhance self-efficacy by helping teachers reflect on and adapt their teaching practices (Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2006). Asrar-ul-Haq et al. (2019) found that regular positive feedback from students contributed significantly to higher self-efficacy among university teachers, as it validated their effectiveness in fostering student learning

Lastly, the socio-cultural context in which teachers work can also influence their self-efficacy. Teachers who operate in environments where their values and teaching methods align with societal and institutional expectations tend to report higher levels of self-efficacy (Chong et al., 2010). On the other hand, a mismatch between personal values and the broader socio-cultural setting can lead to decreased confidence in teaching abilities (Van de Grift et al., 2018). The socio-cultural context in which teaching is either valued or undervalued can significantly impact educators' beliefs in their professional capacities. Yuan and Zhang's (2023) research underscores the importance of the socio-cultural environment in Chinese universities, finding that societal expectations and cultural alignment were critical to the self-efficacy of university faculty members.

Teacher self-efficacy in higher education is shaped by a combination of institutional support, professional development opportunities, workload, student feedback, and socio-cultural context. These factors either reinforce or undermine educators' confidence in their teaching abilities, which directly impacts their overall performance and the quality of education they provide.

D. Enhancement Strategies

Enhancing teacher self-efficacy is essential for improving teaching quality and professional development, and several strategies have been identified as effective in this regard. One key strategy is mentoring, which has been widely recognized as a powerful tool for boosting teachers' confidence and competence. Johnson (2022) highlights that mentoring provides a supportive relationship where teachers can engage in reflective practice, receive constructive feedback, and observe successful teaching strategies. This allows teachers, particularly those who are less experienced, to feel more supported and confident in their teaching abilities, which directly enhances their self-efficacy. The process of mentoring fosters professional growth through the sharing of ideas and experiences, thereby helping teachers build their capacity to manage classroom challenges effectively.

Another effective strategy is participation in training programs designed to improve specific teaching skills and pedagogical techniques. According to Jones and Smith (2021), teachers who engage in structured training programs report significant increases in their self-efficacy, particularly in areas such as classroom management and instructional strategies. These programs provide opportunities for teachers to experiment with new teaching practices in a supportive environment, receive immediate feedback, and refine their approaches before applying them in real classrooms. Continuous professional development through training also keeps teachers informed about new trends and technologies in education, boosting their confidence and ability to meet evolving educational demands.

Collaborative teaching is another approach that has been shown to enhance teacher self-efficacy. Working alongside peers, sharing ideas, and learning from one another in a co-teaching setting creates an environment of mutual support and professional growth. Thompson and Richards (2020) found that collaborative teaching promotes self-efficacy by providing teachers with opportunities to observe different teaching methods, reflect on their practices, and gain new insights through peer discussions. This reduces the isolation often felt by teachers and fosters a sense of community, where they can share responsibilities for student learning and problem-solving. Learning from more experienced colleagues through collaboration further builds teachers' confidence in handling complex classroom situations.

Finally, the use of feedback mechanisms has been found to play a crucial role in enhancing self-efficacy. Both formal and informal feedback from students, peers, and supervisors allows teachers to reflect on their performance, recognize their strengths, and identify areas for improvement. Lee and Park (2023) emphasize that regular feedback sessions significantly improve teachers' self-efficacy by reinforcing successful practices and providing actionable advice on areas needing improvement. Positive and constructive feedback boosts teachers' belief in their capabilities and offers them clear pathways to enhance their teaching practices. Feedback from students, in particular, provides valuable insights into how teaching methods are received and how they impact student outcomes, further contributing to increased self-efficacy.

Strategies such as mentoring, training programs, collaborative teaching, and feedback mechanisms have proven effective in enhancing teacher self-efficacy. These approaches offer teachers opportunities for reflection, professional growth, and support, helping them develop greater confidence in their teaching abilities and improving their overall effectiveness in the classroom. As educational demands continue to evolve, ensuring

access to these strategies is critical for maintaining high levels of teacher self-efficacy and achieving better educational outcomes.

III. METHODOLOGY

The conceptual framework for enhancing higher education teachers' self-efficacy is grounded in three major categories: personal characteristics, institutional factors, and environmental factors, which collectively shape teachers' perceptions of their capabilities. Each of these factors plays a critical role in influencing how teachers assess their effectiveness and in guiding strategies for improvement.

Personal characteristics such as experience, motivation, and self-regulation significantly impact self-efficacy. Experienced teachers tend to report higher self-efficacy as they accumulate skills and strategies over time, enabling them to manage diverse teaching challenges (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Moreover, intrinsic motivation, driven by a teacher's passion for education and belief in their ability to positively impact students, further enhances self-efficacy (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Self-regulation and reflective practices also play a critical role, as teachers who regularly reflect on their teaching methods are better able to identify areas for growth and improvement, reinforcing their sense of competence (Bautista et al., 2023).

In addition to personal attributes, institutional factors such as professional development opportunities, administrative support, and access to resources are crucial for enhancing self-efficacy. Professional development programs allow teachers to refine their skills and stay updated on pedagogical innovations, resulting in improved confidence in their teaching abilities (Beltman et al., 2019). Furthermore, strong administrative support, characterized by clear communication, provision of resources, and recognition of teachers' efforts, is essential in fostering an environment that bolsters teachers' self-efficacy (Dicke et al., 2020). Access to modern teaching resources and technologies also enhances teachers' efficacy, particularly in adapting to new learning environments, as evidenced during the rapid digitalization of education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sharma et al., 2021).

Environmental factors such as student engagement, community expectations, and cultural dynamics also play a pivotal role in shaping teachers' self-efficacy. Teachers often derive confidence from their ability to engage students in learning; when students respond positively and show improvement, it reinforces teachers' belief in their effectiveness (González et al., 2022). Community and societal expectations, as well as peer support within the institution, also influence teachers' self-efficacy. Collaborative networks where teachers share experiences and offer mutual support create an environment conducive to fostering self-efficacy (Akkermans et al., 2022). Cultural factors, particularly in contexts like China where teachers hold a highly respected role in society, can either enhance or diminish self-efficacy depending on the level of support provided (Sun et al., 2020).

To address these influencing factors, several enhancement strategies can be proposed. Mentorship programs, where novice teachers are paired with experienced mentors, provide both emotional and professional support, helping younger teachers navigate challenges and improve their practice (Kim & Cho, 2022). Establishing collaborative professional development communities encourages knowledge sharing and continuous improvement, boosting both individual and collective self-efficacy (Lamb et al., 2020). Reflective teaching practices

should also be encouraged, as these allow teachers to engage in self-regulation and to actively identify areas for improvement (Bautista et al., 2023). Moreover, institutional support structures, such as recognition for achievements and access to resources, are vital for creating an environment where teachers feel confident in their abilities (Dicke et al., 2020). Lastly, providing ongoing training in educational technologies can help teachers adapt to the changing demands of modern education, thereby increasing their self-efficacy (Järvelä et al., 2023).

The key factors influencing higher education teachers' self-efficacy include personal characteristics, institutional support, and the broader educational environment. By addressing these factors through targeted strategies such as mentorship, professional development, reflective practices, and technological training, higher education institutions can significantly enhance their teachers' self-efficacy, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes for both teachers and students.

A. Proposed Enhancement Strategies

The proposed enhancement strategies for improving higher education teachers' self-efficacy, a conceptual model is developed that integrates key strategies such as targeted professional development, institutional support programs, peer mentorship, and regular feedback from students and colleagues. These strategies are grounded in Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy, which emphasizes the importance of teachers' belief in their capabilities to influence student learning outcomes.

Targeted professional development is one of the most effective ways to enhance teachers' self-efficacy. By focusing on the specific needs of educators, professional development programs can equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their roles. Research by Canrinus et al. (2021) highlights that teachers who engage in relevant, continuous professional development, especially in areas such as digital literacy and subject-specific pedagogy, report higher levels of self-efficacy. This is because such programs allow teachers to experience mastery, which is a powerful source of self-efficacy according to Bandura's theory.

Institutional support also plays a critical role in shaping teacher self-efficacy. Teachers who feel supported by their institutions—through access to resources, guidance from leadership, and encouragement—are more likely to navigate challenges confidently, leading to improved self-efficacy. Klassen and Chiu (2022) found that teachers who received strong administrative and peer support had higher self-efficacy levels. Institutional support programs can provide a safety net for teachers, enabling them to experiment with new teaching methods and collaborate more effectively.

Peer mentorship and collaboration are equally important in enhancing self-efficacy. Mentoring relationships, particularly between experienced and novice teachers, provide a framework for sharing best practices, offering feedback, and providing emotional support. Hobbs and Török (2023) demonstrated that peer mentorship significantly improves teachers' self-efficacy, as mentors serve as role models and provide opportunities for vicarious learning—another source of self-efficacy identified by Bandura (1997).

Regular feedback from students and colleagues can significantly enhance self-efficacy by providing teachers with insights into their performance. Feedback mechanisms, such as student surveys or peer observations, allow teachers to reflect on their teaching effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Hattie and Timperley (2022)

emphasize the importance of timely, specific feedback in fostering teacher development. When teachers receive constructive feedback, they gain confidence in their teaching abilities, reinforcing their sense of self-efficacy.

The proposed strategies—targeted professional development, institutional support, peer mentorship, and regular feedback—are designed to collectively enhance teachers' self-efficacy. These strategies are rooted in Bandura's theory and supported by recent research, indicating that their implementation can significantly improve the teaching experience and, by extension, student outcomes.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Several key factors influencing the self-efficacy of higher education teachers, as well as proposed strategies for its enhancement, have emerged. First, institutional support and resources play a crucial role in shaping teacher self-efficacy. Teachers who receive adequate support from their institutions, such as access to professional development, teaching materials, and emotional support, are more likely to feel confident in their teaching abilities. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) highlight that institutional backing significantly contributes to teachers' self-efficacy, and in China, where educational reforms are prevalent, this support becomes even more critical (Zhang et al., 2023).

Professional development is another significant factor. Continuous training programs that focus on innovative teaching methods, digital literacy, and student engagement enhance teacher competence and confidence (Wang et al., 2022). In the context of Changzhou, where educational excellence is emphasized, professional development opportunities tailored to the needs of teachers are essential for boosting self-efficacy. Additionally, student feedback and engagement have a substantial impact. Teachers who receive constructive feedback from students and observe high levels of engagement tend to feel more competent in their teaching roles (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). In Changzhou, implementing consistent feedback mechanisms between students and teachers further strengthens this dynamic.

Cultural and societal expectations also influence self-efficacy. In China, where Confucian values place a high premium on the teacher's role as a moral guide and knowledge source, fulfilling these expectations can either enhance or diminish self-efficacy. Teachers who are well-supported tend to meet these cultural expectations positively, enhancing their confidence, while those who feel burdened by the expectations may experience a decrease in self-efficacy (Wu & Chen, 2021).

To enhance teacher self-efficacy, several strategies are proposed. Mentorship and peer collaboration have proven effective, with experienced teachers mentoring newer ones, providing them with guidance and constructive feedback (Chong et al., 2022). This approach fosters a collaborative environment, where teachers share best practices and build confidence in their teaching abilities. Furthermore, targeted professional development programs that focus on technological integration and innovative pedagogy can significantly improve teachers' self-efficacy (Guskey, 2020). For the college in Changzhou, such initiatives are crucial for ensuring that teachers remain confident and effective in their roles.

Building institutional support systems is another effective strategy. Offering mental health resources, stress management programs, and emotional support can help teachers manage the pressures of the job and maintain their self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). In Changzhou, where teachers may face performance pressures aligned with regional educational goals, these support systems are particularly vital. Lastly, feedback loops that involve students and peers help teachers reflect on their practices and adjust their teaching methods. Constructive feedback can reinforce teachers' belief in their competence and encourage continuous professional growth (Ning et al., 2022). Implementing such feedback systems in the Changzhou college would promote ongoing dialogue and improvement among teachers.

These key findings suggest that enhancing teacher self-efficacy requires a multifaceted approach involving institutional support, professional development, feedback mechanisms, and cultural understanding. These strategies, if implemented in the college in Changzhou, could significantly improve the self-efficacy of higher education teachers.

A. Proposed Enhancement Strategies for Changzhou College

The proposed enhancement strategies for improving higher education teachers' self-efficacy at Changzhou College focus on addressing the key factors influencing teacher efficacy, such as professional development, institutional support, mentoring, and feedback systems. Professional development programs are critical for providing teachers with mastery experiences, which Bandura (1997) identifies as the most powerful source of self-efficacy. For Changzhou College, these programs should be tailored to address local needs and align with broader educational reforms in China. Li, Zhang, and Wang (2023) suggest that localized professional development initiatives are particularly effective in Chinese higher education, as they can target regional educational challenges. Given the national emphasis on improving educational quality, professional development programs at Changzhou College are not only feasible but also essential for helping teachers enhance their skills and confidence.

Institutional support is another key factor in fostering teacher self-efficacy. Teachers require access to adequate resources, administrative backing, and a positive organizational climate to thrive. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) highlight the importance of institutional support in enhancing teachers' abilities to manage their responsibilities and pursue professional growth. At Changzhou College, institutional support can be improved through better resource allocation and streamlined administrative processes. Li and Yang (2022) emphasize that this is especially important for Chinese universities undergoing reforms, as such support creates an environment where teachers can develop and succeed. While budget and administrative constraints may pose challenges, with strategic prioritization, enhancing institutional support is both feasible and necessary for Changzhou College.

Mentoring and peer collaboration also play a vital role in enhancing teacher self-efficacy, as they provide teachers with vicarious learning experiences, another important source of efficacy according to Bandura (1997). A mentoring program at Changzhou College, where experienced faculty members guide less experienced teachers, would promote professional growth and create a supportive community. Zhang, Wu, and Li (2021) found that mentoring programs have a significant positive impact on teacher self-efficacy in Chinese higher education. Such

programs are highly feasible at Changzhou College, requiring minimal financial investment while fostering collaboration and mutual learning among faculty.

Structured feedback systems from both peers and students can significantly enhance teachers' self-efficacy by providing constructive evaluations of their teaching performance. Klassen and Tze (2014) emphasize that feedback is a crucial source of information for teachers, helping them identify areas for improvement and reinforcing their strengths. At Changzhou College, formalizing feedback mechanisms within the current evaluation process would be straightforward. Encouraging student engagement and peer feedback would also help teachers feel more effective and valued in their roles. By implementing these strategies—professional development, institutional support, mentoring, and feedback systems—Changzhou College can create an environment that fosters teacher growth and boosts self-efficacy, ultimately leading to improved teaching outcomes.

B. Implications for Policy and Practice

These insights are critical for institutional policymakers, as self-efficacy has been shown to significantly impact teaching quality, job satisfaction, and teacher retention (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2021). The framework provides a structured approach for identifying the specific needs of higher education teachers and developing policies to address them.

1. Professional Development Programs

One of the primary strategies identified in the framework is the need for continuous professional development. Research has shown that teachers who engage in targeted professional development feel more competent and effective in their roles (Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2020). Institutions should implement structured and ongoing professional development programs that are tailored to teachers' specific needs, such as courses in new teaching methodologies, digital literacy, and classroom management techniques.

For instance, a policy that mandates regular professional development sessions could significantly enhance teacher self-efficacy by improving their skills and confidence in the classroom. Furthermore, these programs should not only be one-size-fits-all; instead, they should be designed to be adaptive to teachers' experience levels and subject areas.

2. Mentorship and Peer Support

The framework also emphasizes the importance of mentorship and peer support as key drivers of teacher self-efficacy. Mentoring programs where experienced faculty members support less experienced or new teachers can help foster a sense of community and shared learning (Ingersoll & Strong, 2022). Peer collaboration allows teachers to exchange ideas, share best practices, and provide emotional support, which is crucial in overcoming challenges and building confidence.

Institutions could create formal mentoring policies that pair newer teachers with seasoned educators. Additionally, offering regular peer-review sessions or collaborative workshops could provide an avenue for teachers to share feedback and learn from each other. This would not only enhance teaching practices but also contribute to a more supportive and cohesive faculty environment.

3. Institutional Support and Resources

Another implication of the framework is the necessity for strong institutional support in terms of resources, workload management, and clear communication. Teacher self-efficacy is often tied to the level of institutional support perceived by the faculty. Providing adequate teaching resources, including access to technology, teaching assistants, and a conducive physical environment, can reduce the stress and workload burden on teachers (Bates, Phalen, & Moran, 2021).

Policies that address teacher workload, such as reducing excessive administrative tasks or providing flexible teaching schedules, can alleviate stress and allow teachers to focus on their core teaching responsibilities. Clear communication channels between the administration and teachers are also vital, as they foster transparency and ensure that teachers feel heard and valued.

4. Regular Feedback and Recognition

Feedback from students, peers, and administrators plays a critical role in shaping teachers' self-efficacy. According to recent studies, teachers who receive constructive feedback are more likely to feel competent and motivated to improve their teaching practices (Hattie & Timperley, 2022). Implementing regular feedback mechanisms, such as anonymous student evaluations or peer reviews, can provide valuable insights for teachers to reflect on and improve their work.

Moreover, institutions should recognize and reward excellence in teaching through awards, promotions, or even public acknowledgment. Recognition not only boosts self-efficacy but also enhances job satisfaction and retention (Hoy & Spero, 2020).

5. Work-Life Balance Policies

Finally, policies that promote work-life balance are essential in enhancing self-efficacy. The increasing demands on higher education teachers, such as research responsibilities and administrative tasks, often lead to burnout, which negatively impacts self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2019). Policies that allow for flexible working hours, sabbaticals, or mental health support services can alleviate stress and improve teachers' overall well-being, which is directly linked to their effectiveness and confidence in their roles.

Professional development programs, mentorship, institutional support, regular feedback, and work-life balance initiatives are all critical strategies that can be implemented at the policy level to improve teacher self-efficacy. By adopting these strategies, higher education institutions can create a more supportive environment for teachers, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for students.

C. Implications for Future Research

Future research can build on the conceptual framework presented in this study by empirically testing various factors that influence higher education teachers' self-efficacy. One critical area for investigation is the role of institutional support, such as leadership, resource allocation, and access to professional development programs, in shaping teachers' self-efficacy. A comparative study across universities with different levels of institutional support would provide valuable insights into which factors are most significant. Brown and Lent (2023) emphasize

that institutional factors are vital in maintaining teacher confidence, especially in environments with increasing performance expectations and workloads.

In addition, future research could use longitudinal designs to explore the long-term impact of professional development initiatives on teacher self-efficacy. By tracking changes before and after targeted training programs, researchers can determine the sustainability of self-efficacy improvements. Chang (2022) has shown that continuous professional development, when combined with peer mentorship, can lead to lasting improvements in self-efficacy, yet more research is needed to identify which types of training yield the best results over time.

Socio-cultural factors should also be examined in greater depth, especially as they relate to specific regions like Changzhou. Comparative studies between different provinces in China could reveal how cultural norms, societal expectations, and community involvement affect teacher self-efficacy. Li and Zhang (2021) found that Confucian traditions and local community engagement play a significant role in shaping teachers' professional identity and self-efficacy, underscoring the need for research that takes into account regional diversity in China.

The impact of student feedback and teacher-student interactions is another area ripe for exploration. Experimental research could investigate how the frequency and type of student feedback—whether positive or constructive—affects teachers' confidence and performance. Kim and Kang (2023) recently demonstrated that constructive student feedback can significantly enhance teacher motivation and competence, suggesting this is an important factor in boosting self-efficacy.

Finally, with the increasing reliance on digital tools in education, future research should explore how technology integration affects teacher self-efficacy. Teachers' proficiency with digital tools, such as learning management systems and online platforms, has been shown to positively impact their self-confidence, but more research is needed to understand how this relationship evolves. Wei and Xu (2023) suggest that teachers with greater digital skills tend to report higher levels of self-efficacy, but the long-term effects of technology adoption in education remain understudied.

Future empirical research should test the proposed conceptual framework across different educational contexts and use both quantitative and qualitative methods. Investigating how regional, institutional, and personal factors interact to influence self-efficacy will deepen our understanding of how to effectively support and enhance teacher confidence, providing practical implications for education policy and practice.

D. Limitations

The limitations of this conceptual study must be acknowledged to ensure a balanced perspective. First, this paper is based on theoretical exploration, lacking empirical testing or data collection. As Goethals et al. (2022) note, while conceptual research can provide significant insights, its practical applicability remains uncertain until the proposed factors and strategies are empirically validated in various educational settings. Second, the focus on a single case study, a college in Changzhou, Jiangsu, China, limits the generalizability of the findings. Zhou and Shi (2021) emphasize that self-efficacy factors can vary significantly depending on the regional and institutional context, making it difficult to apply the findings to higher education institutions in other regions or countries.

Additionally, the scope of influencing factors discussed in this paper may not capture the full complexity of elements affecting teacher self-efficacy. Klassen et al. (2019) point out that self-efficacy is shaped by a broad array of personal, social, and environmental factors, many of which may not have been fully explored in this conceptual study. Furthermore, this paper lacks a longitudinal perspective, which is critical to understanding how self-efficacy evolves over time in response to interventions or changes in the educational environment. As Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2020) argue, observing self-efficacy over longer periods is essential for assessing its development and sustainability.

Finally, this study focuses exclusively on higher education teachers, which may not reflect the experiences of educators in other settings such as primary or secondary education. Usher and Pajares (2019) highlight that self-efficacy can differ across teaching contexts and student demographics, suggesting that the findings may not be universally applicable. Therefore, while the paper offers valuable theoretical insights, its limitations must be considered in future research, particularly regarding its empirical validation and broader applicability.

V. CONCLUSSION

A. Influencing Factors of Self-Efficacy

The primary factors influencing higher education teachers' self-efficacy can be grouped into personal, institutional, and external environmental factors. Personal factors such as experience, motivation, and professional identity play a significant role. Teachers with more experience and greater intrinsic motivation tend to report higher self-efficacy (Klassen & Tze, 2014).

At the institutional level, factors such as administrative support, access to resources, and professional development opportunities are critical. Teachers working in environments that foster collaboration, provide mentorship, and offer structured professional development demonstrate greater confidence in their teaching abilities (Zee & Koomen, 2016). This finding aligns with the broader educational literature suggesting that self-efficacy is influenced by the support systems within an institution (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

The external environment, including cultural expectations and community engagement, also influences self-efficacy. In the context of Chinese higher education, cultural factors such as societal expectations regarding teacher roles, combined with student feedback and performance outcomes, have been shown to impact teacher confidence and effectiveness (Fang, 2021).

B. Enhancement Strategies

The strategies to enhance self-efficacy identified in the conceptual paper include professional development programs, mentorship, and feedback systems. Professional development tailored to specific teaching challenges and focused on active learning strategies has been effective in enhancing self-efficacy (Bautista et al., 2021). Teachers who participate in continuous learning and skills upgrading are better equipped to handle classroom challenges, leading to increased confidence.

Mentorship programs, especially peer mentoring, have been identified as a crucial strategy for building self-efficacy. Experienced teachers can provide guidance and emotional support to less experienced colleagues, helping them navigate institutional challenges and classroom management issues (Krauss et al., 2019).

Lastly, regular and constructive feedback from both peers and students plays a vital role in improving teachers' self-efficacy. Feedback provides teachers with a clear understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement, enabling them to adjust their teaching methods accordingly (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In the context of the college in Changzhou, the implementation of such strategies could significantly contribute to fostering a more supportive and reflective teaching environment.

C. Implications for the College in Changzhou

Applying these strategies in the case study college in Changzhou could lead to measurable improvements in teacher self-efficacy. By investing in teacher development, offering regular feedback sessions, and fostering a collaborative culture within the institution, this college can enhance the overall teaching effectiveness and contribute to better student outcomes. Given the competitive and fast-changing landscape of higher education in China, such strategies are essential to maintaining the quality of education and the well-being of teachers.

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