Instructional Leadership
to the **Fore**

Research
and Evidence

Editors
Donnie Adams et al.

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Donnie Adams
Chua Yan Piaw
Kenny Cheah Soon Lee
Bambang Sumintono

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

Research is part of the academic exercise of every postgraduate student. The product becomes a milestone for the student when they eventually submit a thesis or dissertation that completes their postgraduate degree requirement. Starting a research is always a big challenge for a novice researcher, from finding a topic, collecting relevant information and eventually, the know-hows in preparing the research proposal.

This book, which is part of the Institute of Educational Leadership (IEL), University of Malaya book publication series, is written to help students better understand their research in Instructional Leadership. The first objective is to provide access and visibility on past dissertations and thesis research done in Instructional Leadership at IEL to the public and other Higher Education Institutions, local and international. The second objective is to provide fast facts and information on postgraduate students and their dissertations and thesis. This will save precious time of having to search for each dissertation and thesis.

We started on this book based on a survey administered to the current IEL postgraduate students and alumni titled the '5 most important areas that interest you when you're skimming through a dissertation & thesis'. The feedback from respondents, as indicated in the figure below, shows the five vital information they seek when reading a dissertation and thesis. Thus, the structure of the book is based on the students' interest and need. Only minimal editing was done on these past doctoral and master dissertation and thesis chapters as we did not want to change the content and the writing style of the original authors. The original full text of these dissertations and thesis can be accessed through the QR code provided at the end of each chapter.
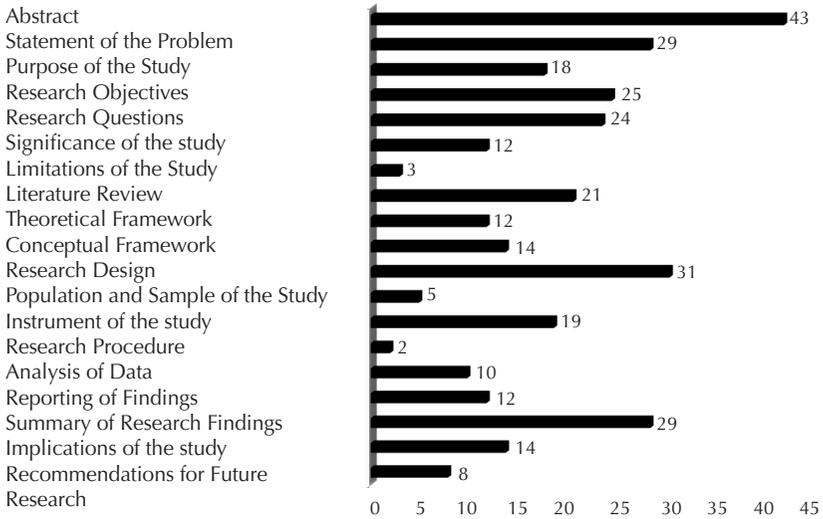
Future postgraduate students will also find this book useful. As research supervisors, we are often questioned by prospective postgraduate students on what sort of research was done before and what kind of research is expected. Any background literature on a theory of their interest? How do they go about writing their research proposal? This book will assist students to answer these vital questions. We hope our readers will benefit from this book, in their efforts to write and produce high-quality research.

Editors
Donnie Adams
Chua Yan Piaw
Kenny Cheah Soon Lee
Bambang Sumintono

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A book is a monumental project, one that requires much assistance and support if it is to reach completion. Therefore, we acknowledge the contributions of the following people:

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Donnie Adams, a senior lecturer at the Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Malaya, obtained his PhD in Educational Leadership from the University of Malaya. He is a recipient of the University of Malaya's Bright Sparks scholarship - a special programme at UM to upgrade research and publications by selecting outstanding researchers (Bright Sparks) from within UM and other universities to serve with UM and a recipient of the University of Malaya's Excellence Award 2016: PhD Completion in Less than 3 Years. Dr Donnie Adams is also a candidate of AKEPT 'Young Scholars Leadership Programme' 2016 and University Malaya's Emerging Scholars Leadership Advancement programme (EmeraLd). He is an author and reviewer of Web of Science ISI (Social Science Citation Index) and SCOPUS journals and the Editor-in- chief of the International Online Journal of Educational Leadership (IOJEL). He is actively involved in research and development work in the area of leadership in special educational needs and school-wide reformation of inclusive education agenda in Malaysia.

Professor Dr. Chua Yan Piaw is a professor at the Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Malaya. His book series. "Research Methods and Statistics", is McGraw-Hill's Top-10 Bestselling Titles in Malaysia. He is an author, reviewer and editorial board member of Web of Science ISI journals (Social Science Citation Index). He was awarded the 2015 Outstanding Journal Reviewer Award by Elsevier for his contribution in reviewing journal articles of a Tier 1 ISI journal in the Thomson Reuters Social Science Citation Index. He is often invited by local and private universities to speak on data analysis using AMOS, SPSS and Smart PLS workshops.

Dr. Kenny Cheah Soon Lee obtained his PhD in Educational Leadership and MEd(Mgmt) from the University of Malaya. As an academician, he dedicates his time to teaching, writing and expanding the knowledge base of Educational Leadership, People Development & Qualitative Research. Being an international affiliate member of the American Psychological Association (APA), he is also a certified Train-the-Trainer specialist and ATLAS.ti Consultant for Asia and Oceana. Currently, he is a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Malaya.

Dr. Bambang Sumintono worked as a chemistry teacher for seven years in Lombok, Indonesia. He completed his Masters degree in educational administration at Flinders university, Australia funded by AusAID scholarship in 2001. His doctoral study at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand in Educational Policy in 2007, was sponsored by NZAID. From October 2008 to December 2013, he worked as a lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University Teknologi Malaysia. Starting May 2014, he has been a lecturer and researcher at the Institute of Educational Leadership, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya. His research interest is in educational policy, educational leadership and Indonesian education development. He has written two textbooks about application of rasch modeling for social sciences research in Bahasa Indonesia. He is often invited to conduct workshops about rasch model in many universities in Indonesia.

Mr Edward Devadason is currently a PhD student at the Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Malaya doing a case study on Instructional Leadership Practices of Primary School Leaders. He obtained his Master of Social Work from University Science Malaysia (USM). He was conferred the Golden Keys International Honors Society membership for academic achievement by USM. He is the winner of the 3 Minute Thesis Presentation in the Asia Leadership Summit 2016. He is also a certified Trainer by HRDF Malaysia (Ministry of Human Resources) with the ability to conduct training need analysis (TNA), planning for adult learning, designing, conducting competency based training programmes and accessing participant competence. Currently, being part of a research team in UM, he is actively involved on research in the area of Instructional Leadership.

Mrs Ravadhi Periasamy is pursuing her PhD in Educational Leadership in University Malaya. She completed her degree in Arts and Social Science in University Malaya and obtained her Masters degree in

Educational Leadership from University of Malaya. She has a certificate in the National Profesional Qualification for Educational Leadership (NPQEL) and Diploma in Management and Educational Leadership from the Institute of Aminuddin Baki in 2012.

Mr Joseph Velarde completed his Master of Educational Leadership at the University of Malaya and Bachelors degree in Communication Arts at the University of the Philippines. He has been an English teacher for 12 years in the Philippines and Malaysia. In the past five years, he has taken on leadership roles in an international school in Kuala Lumpur where he serves as assistant coordinator, senior team leader, and assistant global head of the department. Moreover, he has championed student and teacher leadership through student-led organisations and professional learning communities. His current research focuses on school leadership and cultural diversity.

1

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: PLACING LEARNING TO THE FORE[1]

Donnie Adams, Edward Devadason, Ravadhi Periasamy and
Kenny Cheah Soon Lee

Introduction

When schools are being held accountable to the highest level of academic achievement and standards, strong leadership is important and critically needed (Hallinger, et. al., 2018). Student achievement attribute its success to relatively high levels of leadership (Jones, et. al., 2015; Harris, Jones & Adams, 2016). Principals, as school leaders are seen to have the greatest influence in schools (Harris, et. al., 2014). It is generally known that there can be no successful school with an incapable principal or an unsuccessful school with an effective principal. Unsuccessful schools turn around into successful schools, and regrettably outstanding schools slide rapidly into decline as a result of leadership.

According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), considerable emphasis has been placed recently on school leaders' contributions to building staff capacity. In addition, successful school leaders address changes, particularly in relation to learning. They also pointed out four sets of leadership qualities and practices in different contexts that accomplish this goal, organizing them into four categories: building vision and setting directions; understanding and developing people; redesigning the organization; and managing the teaching and learning programme. This emphasis is reflected, in the term "Instructional Leadership (IL)" and in the successful practices that school leaders possess.

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[1] A version of this work is currently under consideration for publication in in Adams, D., Chua, Y.P., Cheah, K.S.L., Sumintono, B. (2019). Kepimpinan Instruksional Dalam Pendidikan Di Malaysia

Principal as Instructional Leader

The tasks shouldered by principals are so enormous that only skilled leaders can handle and get the people whom they lead to do the greatest things and bring the system they are working with to greater heights. To maintain the balance and for a successful outcome, principals are encouraged to be strong instructional leaders as skilled principals have a dynamic influence upon change implementation, school improvement and the school's advancement (Lee, Walker & Chui, 2012).

With pressures to ensure accountability in student learning outcomes, educational change in schools and school performance, principal instructional leadership has been considered as one of the most prominent determinants (Harris, et. al., 2017; Blase´ & Blase´, 1999; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Printy, 2008; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). While transformational leadership "continues to be one of the most popular leadership models in education" (Gumus et. al., 2016, p. 13), "the impact of instructional leadership on student outcomes is three to four times greater than that of transformational leadership" (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008, p. 655).

Researchers found that effective schools have instructional leaders who focus on curriculum and instruction (Louis & Robinson, 2012). An effective instructional leader usually displays a high level of collaboration and a high team spirit among the staff members. They also influence and engage teachers toward achieving school goals (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). It is also found that, teachers under a leader who practices instructional leadership are more committed to teaching (Lai & Cheung, 2013).

Principal instructional leadership depends more on professionalism and influence, hence, bringing about a positive and permanent impact on staff motivation and student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Thus, this form of leadership has become relatively important across the world. From a wide range of research undertaken on instructional leadership, it is undeniable that this practice has a relatively positive impact on student learning outcome (Hallinger, 2012; Hallinger & Chen, 2015).

Frameworks for Learning Outcomes

Prior to the emerging Instructional Leadership Model, Bossert et al. (1982) in a seminal literature review sought to clearly define the instructional management construct clearly. Instructional management was conceptualized as an action and strategy employed by principals to improve learning outcomes of students by bringing an impact on

school's instructional organization and learning climate. As principal's role is revolved around managerial functions which is concerned the coordination and control of curriculum and instructions, they choose the term "instructional management" (Cohen & Miller 1980).

Over time, the term instructional leadership has taken over the term instructional management which was initially employed by Bossert and his team of scholars and practitioners in USA. The distinction between these two terms lies in the sources of power used by the principals to achieve results in the schools. However, recognizing the principals who rely more on expertise and influence than on formal authority like positional power to achieve positive impact, it was preferred that the term 'Instructional Leadership' is used (Blasé 1987; Hallinger & Heck 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Hallinger and Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model (1985)

A systematic review of studies on leadership models in educational research from 1980 to 2014 by Gumus et. al. (2016) reported almost half of all of the studies on leadership models focused on instructional leadership from 1980 to 1995. The most well-known theory of Instructional leadership was developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) from their model of Instructional Management by examining the instructional leadership behaviour of 10 elementary school principals and reviewing the literature on school effectiveness. Instructional leadership is seen as a strong and directive leadership that focuses directly on curriculum and instructional practices (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Instructional leaders are important people in the schools who brings about school effectiveness, especially in terms of teaching and learning. Hallinger and Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model (1985) has been widely used because of its high validity and reliability (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). It is from this conceptual framework that the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was derived.

This is the single most widely used scale to measure principal instructional leadership in 500+ studies conducted in more than 35 countries (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). As classified by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) and further discussed and explained by Hallinger (2011), this model comprises of three main dimensions of Instructional Leadership (a) defining school mission, (b) managing instructional programs and (c) promoting positive school climate and ten job functions. Two job functions specified under the first main dimension of defining the school's mission are, (i) framing clear school goals and (ii) communicating school goals. Under

the second main dimension of managing instructional program, three job functions were described; (i) supervising and evaluating instruction (ii) coordinating curriculum and (iii) monitoring student progress. The third dimension of the model which focuses on promoting positive school climate consist of five specific job functions, (i) protecting instructional time; (ii) promoting professional development; (iii) maintaining high visibility; (iv) providing incentive for teachers; and (v) providing incentives for learning.

Murphy's Instructional Leadership Framework (1990)

In a comprehensive review of literature on instructional leadership, Murphy (1990) noted that principals in effective schools, where the quality of teaching and learning were strong, demonstrated instructional leadership both directly and indirectly. Using this review, he provided a systematic and comprehensive framework of instructional leadership. However, this framework has not been not empirically tested (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

The framework consists of four dimensions of instructional leadership broken down into sixteen different roles or behaviors; (a) developing the school mission and goals; (b) promoting quality instruction and monitoring student progress; (c) promoting a climate for learning; and (d) creating a supportive working environment (Murphy, 1990). The first dimension of developing mission and goals incorporates two roles for the principal; (i) framing school goals and (ii) communicating these goals to students, parents and teachers.

The second dimension of promoting quality instruction and monitoring student progress involves five roles of the principal; (i) promoting quality instruction, (ii) supervising and evaluating instruction, (iii) allocating and protecting instructional time, (iv) coordinating the curriculum and (v) monitoring student progress. The third dimension of promoting positive school climate expanded from Hallinger and Murphy (1985) model with an addition of one sub dimension, which is establishing positive expectation and standard.

In the fourth dimension, developing supportive work environment, Murphy (1990) has described six roles of an instructional leader; (i) creating a safe and orderly learning environment; (ii) providing opportunities for meaningful student involvement; (iii) developing staff collaboration; (iv) securing outside resources to achieve school goals; and (v) forging links between home and the school.

4

Weber's Instructional Leadership Model (1996)

Weber's Model (1996) of instructional leadership model incorporates shared leadership and empowerment of informal leaders. Weber points to the need for an instructional leader even with the absence of the principal. In this regard Weber (1996) claims that effective instructional leadership would depend on a large extent on two important factors, that is, the flexibility of the principal in sharing leadership duties and the clarity of how these leadership duty is matched with individuals who can perform them collaboratively.

Weber (1996) identified five essential domains of instructional leadership; (i) defining the school mission, (ii) managing the curriculum and instruction, (iii) promoting a positive learning climate, (iv) observing and improving instruction, and; (v) assessing the instructional program. Emphasis was given to the fifth domain as an essential improvement to an instructional program.

According to this model, the instructional leader plays an important role in initiating and contributing to the planning, designing, administrating and analyzing the effectiveness of a curriculum. Continuous scrutiny of the instructional program in turn enables the teachers to meet the needs of the students through constant refinement and revision.

Thus, Weber's model in general incorporates research about shared leadership and empowerment of informal leaders to create a school that emphasizes student achievement. Similar to Murphy's (1990) model, this model has not been empirically tested. Therefore, it's unclear if an instructional leader demonstrating these behaviors will result in high student achievement.

Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy's (2005) Instructional Leadership Model

Alig-Mielcarik (2003) found three distinct similarities that emerged from a study of the three models discussed (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Murphy, 1990; Weber, 1996). All three indicated the importance of instructional leaders defining and communicating goals, monitoring and providing feedback on the teaching and learning process, and promoting and emphasizing the importance of professional development.

Alig-Mielcarik (2003) used these three common dimensions to come up with his own framework of instructional leadership which he tested empirically. It was found principals have an indirect influence on student achievement. Rather, the linkage between school leadership and student

learning, as Hallinger and Heck (1996) suggested, "is inextricably tied to the actions of others in the school" (p. 24) such as teachers who work hard, an orderly learning environment, diligent students who respect the success of others and high achievable goals set for students.

Socioeconomic status of the students was factored into the model by Alig- Mielcarek and Hoy (2005), further developing the original instructional leadership models by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), Murphy (1990) and Weber (1996). Bush (2017) in his editorial reinforced students' socioeconomic factor does impact learning and that will in turn affect leadership responses. Students who come from low socioeconomic status could be "unprepared learners" and resulting in no or little learning. With limited resources and materials, it is difficult to make learning happen in schools.

Conflicts to Instructional Leadership

Instructional leaders face conflict between leading learning and their daily engagement of professional practise (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). 21st century school principals are to emphasize on their professional core in lieu of school management. According to Louis et. al. (2010), principals should spend more time in ensuring and monitoring students' learning activities and teachers' professional duties.

Clearly, instructional leadership advocates that the organizational needs, implementation plans, and professional plans should be aligned to focus primarily on improving learning and teaching. Even though the main role of principals is to focus on the teaching and learning processes, they are often tied to managerial and administrative tasks. In politically centralized system, having to take into consideration the mandates and policies from the authorities above and having to meet the expectations of those below impede the principal's authority to command and instruct, which is important in instructional leadership (Hallinger & Walker, 2017).

Research on instructional leadership generally concludes that a strong, directive principal, focused on curriculum and instruction, is essential for effective schools (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Successful instructional leaders have been characterized as "hands-on" leaders, engaged with curriculum and instruction issues, unafraid to work directly with teachers, and often present in classrooms (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p.66).

The view of instructional leaders as curriculum specialists, have the technical and content expertise that their teachers have, mentoring their

teaching staff by observing practice, providing pointed feedback, and modelling instruction when necessary is an impossible feat. Although this is an appealing portrait of the ideal instructional leader, this is poorly suited to the reality of many of today's schools.

Conclusion

"The concept of instructional leadership has remained one of the most popular leadership models in the field of education over more than three decades" (Gumus et. al., 2016, p. 17). Principals are responsible for the school's achievement and they are expected to progress to become an instructional leader rather than just a school administrator. Thus, instructional leadership has become relatively important in placing learning to the fore. Instructional leadership is widely promoted and to achieve this, school leaders need to be prepared through professional development programs with a focus on learning in the 21st century (Adams, Kutty & Zabidi, 2017; Tan, 2012).

With increasing recognition of the positive impact of effective instructional leadership and the increasing demands of the role, it is essential to identify the extent to which a school leader exercises the role as an instructional leader in their system. Though from a wide range of research undertaken on the subject of instructional leadership, it is undeniable that this practice has a relatively positive impact on school performance.

However, Hallinger and Walker (2017) cautioned that principal leadership must be studied with reference to the school context. The relevance of the instructional leadership models in many contexts remains relatively unexplored. It is the context that posed the constraints, resources, and opportunities (Harris, et. al., 2015; Hallinger, 2005; Perera, Adams, & Muniandy, 2015) which needs research and its issue addressed in order for principals to lead their schools where its student achievement could be attributed to relatively high levels of leadership.

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The structure of the book is based on the students' interest and need. The original full text of these dissertations and thesis can be accessed through the QR code provided at the end of each chapter. Future postgraduate students interested in Instructional Leadership will also find this book useful. The book highlights what sort of research was done before, what kind of research is expected, a background literature on Instructional Leadership and finally how can they craft a successful research proposal to Graduate on Time.