

2022

## Administrators and Teachers' Perceptions of Instructional Leadership Practices to Increase Student Achievement

Keyna Crawford Anderson  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Keyna Crawford Anderson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2022

Abstract

Administrators and Teachers' Perceptions of Instructional Leadership Practices to

Increase Student Achievement

by

Keyna Crawford Anderson

MA, University of the West Indies, 2006

BEd, University of the West Indies, 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

November 2022

## Abstract

The lack of achievement in public schools has been a concern globally and has negatively affected the growth of communities and the economy. School principals have a central role in implementing effective instructional practices and creating a positive teaching and learning environment that fosters student achievement. The problem addressed was a lack of instructional leadership in a British territory. The conceptual framework for this research was the instructional leadership model of Hallinger and Murphy, which defines three main dimensions of instructional leadership: (a) defining the school's mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) promoting a positive school learning climate. The research question concerned how school administrators use instructional leadership practices to increase student achievement. Purposive sampling was used to collect data for this basic qualitative research study. The participants were 16 public school educators from a local school district. The data were collected by conducting interviews on Zoom. Data analysis involved a systematic process of coding and thematic analysis. The identified themes were understanding of instructional leadership, common instructional leadership practices, and the challenges of instructional leadership. The findings reinforce that a principal's instructional leadership practices are critical to increase student success, although there remains some ambiguity regarding what constitutes instructional leadership. This study's implications for positive social change include increasing principals' awareness of the best practices for instructional leadership, which they can potentially apply to increase student achievement. Higher student achievement may encourage the growth of communities and the economy.

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## Dedication

First, I would like to thank my heavenly father, who instilled a purpose and a passion for learning and helping others from the first day of my career. I would also like to thank Him for giving me the strength and determination to push until I completed this journey. I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, my first teacher and my forever cheerleader. Thank you for your prayers and your unwavering support. This dissertation is also dedicated to my three heartbeats: David, my husband, and Romario and Justin, my sons. Thank you for your love and understanding as I pursued this goal. All that I do, and every goal that I set, has been to provide the best life for them. To my brothers Leighton and Peter and my sister Venice, thank you for checking up on me and cheering me along. To my mentors, the late Mervel Byrd Raynor and Clantis Pinnock who instilled in me the value for education and taught me the characteristics of true leadership and the importance of attaining excellence not only for me but to make the world a better place. To the numerous dedicated educational leaders and educators who have influenced my life and believed in me—Commissioner Kalmar Richards, Althea Emery, Shervelle Burch, Principal Kenneth Caesar and Deputy Timothy Sousa—I salute you.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Instructional leadership or learning-centered leadership (Gumus et al., 2018), focuses on the strategies and actions that principals use to increase student outcomes and build teachers' knowledge and skills (Fullan et al., 2018; Hallinger et al., 2015). It is a well-researched concept that has garnered greater attention since the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in a period of rapid educational reform. Global policy pressures and increased demands to raise the standard of education have increased principals' accountability. This emphasis on responsibility has increased the interest in leadership styles, particularly instructional leadership, and has also resulted in the role of the principal evolving and becoming more complex and multifaceted (Boyce & Bowers, 2018). The problem that was addressed in this study was a lack of instructional leadership in this British territory. Although multiple scholars have examined the role that instructional leadership plays in western societies, researchers have only recently begun to analyze the concept in the context of the developing societies of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Alsaleh, 2019; Hallinger et al., 2015). I sought to contribute to this emerging body of knowledge with this study of the role of instructional leadership in increasing student achievement in a public school in a British territory. The study may lead to positive social change by providing knowledge that instructional leaders can use to increase student achievement.

### **Background**

The context in which the research was conducted was a British territory. At the time of the study, the thriving banking and other financial services sector was the largest

for this territory, but the education system was slowly developing. The department of education controlled all school programs. The education system structure includes a commissioner; a permanent secretary; a chief education officer; directors of curriculum, schools, student services, and early childhood; and other education officers, each of whom reported to the minister of education. There were 38 schools, about 6,000 students, and approximately 935 teachers at the time of writing.

In 2007, the *Hopkins Report* reviewed the education system and reported a sense of urgency for this British Public School System to deliver a 21st-century education that ensured that students will be able to compete locally and globally (Bernews, 2010). The *Report* recommended that (a) principals be given autonomy and be strategically placed in schools to improve student outcomes and that those who are not successful remove from duty; (b) the competencies of principals be assessed to lead successful turnaround efforts; (c) ongoing professional development (PD) at the school site be supported; (d) an annual survey on PD needs of teachers based on systematic goals and standards be administered; (e) the assurance that all daily classroom instruction effectively incorporate best practices that are student-centered; (f) the design and implementation of leadership institutes for teachers, officers and administrators aspiring to leadership positions for succession planning; and (g) elevation of teacher content competency and skill acquisition to international standards in core subject areas at all levels. Based on these recommendations, government officials established a 5-year plan to reform education that became effective with the 2010-2011 school year (Bernews, 2010).

Education is one of the foremost concerns of this British territory (Connell, 2019; Pearman, 2021; Rabain, 2020). As Connell (2019) noted, public education in this British territory has been criticized for decades and has failed many students creating uneducated children who cannot read or write and struggle with unemployment and turning to crime and drugs; the system needs reforming. According to the minister of education, the current education system does not serve our children or educators at the highest level of excellence they deserve (Rabain, 2020). As a result, officials introduced another strategic plan for the public school system, PLAN 2022. The plan is organized into five priority areas, including enhancing teacher practice and systematic leadership, which were two key areas of the current research. Simons (2017), a former shadow minister of education, commented that strong transformational and transactional leadership are needed to achieve any strategic plan's objectives.

Over the last several decades, school principals globally have faced increased demands for accountability by policymakers and the public, which has critically impacted school policies and schooling, reaching beyond the school walls and into classrooms (Lowenhaupt et al., 2016). As a result of accountability, stakeholders have focused their attention on education reforms and school principals' role. One of the main consequences of high-stakes accountability for administrators is the pressure to show that their instructional practices contribute to school improvement (Day & Sammons, 2016). Consequently, instructional leadership, a popular leadership style, emerged and has been adopted over the years to emphasize the importance of teaching and learning. For this research, instructional leadership is thought of as leadership that involves the

deliberate use of strategies and actions to communicate high expectations for teachers and students. It is also used to monitor assessment and student academic progress, promote the school climate and culture, and create a supportive work environment (Fullan et al., 2018; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger et al., 2015).

The role of principals has dramatically changed. In previous years, administrators were responsible for school safety, scheduling, and enforcing school policies (Glanz et al., 2017). Today, school principals, directly and indirectly, impact the schools for which they are responsible. The principal carries countless responsibilities, including administrative matters, student discipline, curriculum activities, safety, monitoring teachers, assessment, curriculum, communication with parents and other stakeholders, and PD. According to Glanz et al. (2017), reviews of education reforms in several countries have shown that schools that experienced success are led by instructional leaders whose focus is on improving teaching and learning.

Research has shown that the principal's instructional leadership practices impact a school's overall effectiveness (Day & Sammons, 2016; Glanz et al., 2017; Hallinger et al., 2017). However, because administrators are involved in many tasks, they may become distracted from what most affects students. Administrators can influence classroom instruction and teachers' behavior, knowledge, practice, and competency (Ismail et al., 2018). In this study, I sought epistemological and ontological understanding of instructional leadership and student achievement in the British territory.

## **Problem Statement**

The problem that was addressed is that administrators often concentrate on the day-to-day operations of their schools, and there remains a lack of understanding of how public school administrators in this British Territory use instructional leadership practices to increase student achievement. Researchers have shown that the strategic position of administrators influences classroom instruction, teacher knowledge, teacher knowledge, and competence (Gunawan, 2017; Ismail et al., 2018). There is now a need among scholars, educators, and policy makers on a global scale to determine the connection between educational leadership and students' outcomes (Almarshad, 2017; Gumus et al., 2018). If educators are expected to continue to meet the developmental needs of their students, principal leadership will be the key for school systems to be successful (Fullan, 2001). Furthermore, researchers have an urgent challenge to theoretically and empirically investigate instructional leadership in different national contexts (Hallinger et al., 2017) because educational systems differ worldwide, and there may be variances in principals' instructional leadership practices. Scholars have cautioned researchers not to accept leadership practices from only western contexts as the practices are questionable and sometimes futile (Noman et al., 2018).

This lack of instructional leadership in this British Territory may have led to widening of the achievement gap and students leaving school lacking the skills and knowledge necessary for their careers and lives. Consequently, McWhirther (2020) postulates that it is time that the problems being experienced in education fixed because the public education system has failed for decades to provide robust public education and



equip students with the fundamental skills to participate fully in our community. Connell (2019) agreed and stated over the last several decades, school principals globally have faced increased demands for accountability by policymakers and the public, which has critically impacted school policies and schooling, reaching beyond the school walls and into classrooms (Lowenhaupt et al., 2016). As a result of accountability, stakeholders have focused their attention on education reforms and school principals' role. One of the main that the problems in public education needs to be addressed because its future is imbalanced. In the past 30 years, the school setting and the practices of principals have changed because of the introduction of education reforms intended to raise the standard of education (Glanz et al., 2017; Hallinger et al., 2018). Although much research has been conducted on instructional leadership (Glanz et al., 2017; Harris et al., 2017), additional research is needed. Principals' perspectives about their instructional leadership practices need to be investigated, now that they are mandated to support reforms such as standard-based grading and the strategic plan, PLAN 2022- a strategic plan for this British territory public school system. Researchers have posited that for instructional leadership to be impactful, principals have to spend most of their time on tasks related to teaching, learning, and education in general (Murphy et al., 2016; Şişman, 2016). Geleta and Ababa (2015) and Murphy et al. (2016) concurred but further stated that the time principals spend as instructional leaders has not changed much in the last 40 years. The need to prioritize instructional leadership practices is grounded in research that has validated the impact such leadership has on closing the achievement gap (Hallinger et al., 2018; Kiranli Güngör & Aydin, 2019).

There is a gap in the research literature on instructional leadership practices and student achievement in the British territory. The empirical results linking educational leadership and students' outcomes are inconclusive at best (Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). The inconsistencies in the empirical research pose significant challenges to policy makers and professional educators (Almarshad, 2017). By identifying the strength of the relationships between specific principal practices and student achievement, educational leaders may better understand the instructional practices necessary to improve student performance (Almarshad, 2017). The absence of solid knowledge on the effect of leadership on students' achievement impedes the continuous process of schools' improvement. Researchers in the past have identified specific instructional leadership behaviors related to improving the teaching and learning process, such as resource providers (Blasé & Blasé, 1998). However, today, because of new responsibilities related to student achievement, leadership studies are essential if authentic improvement and effective implementation imposed by complex and external policy expectations are realized (Derrington & Campbell, 2018). Consequently, policy makers and leaders at the Department of Education can utilize the body of research to guide their decisions and work towards supporting principals in their role as instructional leaders during education reforms.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the role that instructional leadership plays in increasing student achievement in public schools in a British territory. Researchers suggest that principals have a central role in

implementing effective instructional practices leading to improved academic achievement and more effective schools (Glanz et al., 2017; Hallinger et al., 2015). Researchers have also stated that not much is known about why, when, and how principals guide teachers' work in the classroom and implement instructional leadership practices that directly or indirectly affect student growth (Salo et al., 2015). As instructional leaders, principals are expected to engage in leadership practices that will engage and support student achievement. The study provided an opportunity to hear from both principals and teachers about their views on the instructional leadership practices that support student achievement.

### **Research Question**

The research question for this research was, How are school administrators using instructional leadership practices to increase student achievement?

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study's conceptual framework was Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) model of instructional leadership. Using the model, researchers have generated empirical evidence about instructional leadership for the past 30 years (Geleta & Ababa, 2015; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood et al., 2004; Senol & Lesinger, 2018). This model is used explicitly as a lens to understand the roles of the school administrators and the instructional leadership practices that administrators need to apply to increase student achievement.

According to Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional leadership model, principals as instructional leaders indirectly support teachers because they work with

people, structures, processes, and culture. Hallinger and Murphy's model of instructional leadership conceptualizes the principal's instructional leadership roles in three main dimensions: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate (see also Geleta & Ababa, 2015; Harris et al., 2017). The three main dimensions are further categorized into 10 instructional leadership functions: frame the school goal, communicate the school goals, coordinate curriculum, supervise and evaluate instruction, monitor student progress, protect instructional time, provide incentives for teachers, provide incentives for learning, promote PD, and maintain high visibility. The Hallinger and Murphy framework served as a reference to refine the study's focus, develop an interview protocol, and guide the data analysis. Finally, the framework informed the development of conclusions and recommendations for future studies.

### **Nature of the Study**

I used a basic qualitative design. By using an interpretive paradigm, I was able to focus on the whole experience and explore in-depth individual meanings through formal discussions and interviews (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Qualitative research clarifies participants' experiences and is applicable when the focus is to view, understand, and engage people as experts about their life experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Qualitative researchers begin with a problem or a question and gather data through discussions with experienced participants about a specific topic. I chose a basic qualitative design because it allowed me the opportunity to explore a

phenomenon from a real-world perspective (Ravitch & Carl, 2019) and acquire a greater understanding of a situation (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017).

I collected data from a total 16 educators. The participants were both principals and teachers. The basis of the interview questions was the three dimensions of the instructional leadership model by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), which includes defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate. The participants' responses were collected using an interview protocol, audio recording device, and field notes. The data collected were analyzed to identify and describe themes related to instructional practices and student achievement.

### **Definitions**

*Instructional leadership:* A term, also known as learning-centered leadership (Gumus et al., 2018), that encompasses a deliberate focus on the strategies and actions that principals use to increase student outcomes and build teachers' knowledge and skills (Fullan et al., 2018; Hallinger et al., 2015). Instructional leadership emphasizes intentional use of data and evidence-based strategies to support program coherence (Fullan et al., 2018; Hallinger et al., 2015).

*Professional development (PD):* Processes and activities that are designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so they might, in turn, improve the learning of students (Guskey, 1999).

*School climate:* A multidimensional construct that includes physical, social, and academic dimensions (Loukas, 2007). The school climate is the school characteristics

that differentiate one school from another and which impact both behavior and school personnel (Akram et al., 2018)

### **Assumptions**

There were several assumptions associated with this qualitative research. The first assumption was that administrators' instructional leadership is influenced by contextual, political, and cultural factors that differ from country to country and school (Bailey et al., 2021; Seong, 2019; Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2018). Another assumption was that the selected participants would be objective and would truthfully and authentically answer the interview questions. Therefore, the participants would willingly share their lived experiences rather than generate responses that do not reflect their experiences. During the interview process, I assured participants of the confidentiality of their responses and the anonymity of their identity. Also, because they were volunteers, they could withdraw from the study at any time without any implications.

Other assumptions made were that the selection criteria were appropriate to assure that the participants had all experienced the same or similar research phenomenon. Additionally, I assumed that the small population of principals on the island was sufficient to obtain answers to the interview protocol's questions. Another assumption was that the instructional leadership practices of school principals were related to student achievement. Finally, I assumed that the participants would provide insights about instructional leadership in the British territory that could potentially help support current and future instructional leaders.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

A study's delimitations are limitations consciously set by the researcher and are concerned with the study's objectives, research questions, variables of interest, the paradigm, conceptual framework, study participants, and the methodology (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The research problem was that there was a lack of instructional leadership in a British territory. For this study, I restricted the scope of the study to a total of 16 educators from one British territory. Another delimitation of the study was the timeframe of the interviews and the location of the study site. Other potential delimitations included time constraints and data collection delays because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although this study was specific to administrators' experiences and understanding of instructional leadership practices in one context, there are detailed descriptions of the data and the context to encourage transferability to other contexts.

### **Limitations**

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) defined limitations as potential weaknesses that are usually out of the researcher's control and are closely associated with the chosen research design, funding, or other factors. The limitations are usually of external conditions that may constrain the scope of a study or its outcomes. Limitations are inherent in all studies. They are imposed restrictions are essentially out of the researcher's control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). One limitation of this study is the pool from which the participants were derived. I selected participants based on their knowledge about instructional leadership. Individuals' perceptions of instructional leadership, workload, and the importance of this study may have influenced their willingness to participate in the

investigation. Another limitation may be the limited number of study participants. According to Boddy (2016), the sample size for qualitative research depends on the context and the research paradigm. Because of the small sample size of 16 participants, the findings will be limited to one British territory; consequently, the leadership practices identified will not be generalizable to a broader population. The omission of demographic data related to gender and length of service as a principal or teacher will also limit the transferability of the findings of this research. Another assumption made was the small population of principals on the island was sufficient for me to obtain answers to the interview protocol's question. Finally, the information provided by the principals and teachers may be biased as principals may have embellished their instructional leadership practices, and their perception of instructional leadership practices may have influenced the teachers' responses to questions.

### **Significance**

Investigations about how administrators understand and contribute to instructional leadership are significant because school leadership is the second most crucial factor after class instruction (Dutta & Sahney, 2016). Although instructional leadership is widely researched and implemented in western societies, there is now an urgency to expand the investigation of instructional leadership in other contexts including this British territory (Hallinger et al., 2017). The principal in their role indirectly influence student performance by influencing teachers' instructional strategies; as a result, researchers have scrutinized the role of the principal (Hallinger et al., 2015). Thus, this research may be used as a guide for supervisory or education officers who oversee principals' instructional



practices and unveil the gaps in understanding and practice of the administrators as instructional leaders. The lack of student achievement in public schools remains a concern globally. If schools are to become successful institutions that graduate productive citizens, all stakeholders must find the answers that can lead schools in the direction of excellence. Without instructional leaders who can create social change, not only will public schools continue to see a decline in education outcomes, but the effects within the educational and workforce environments will continue to escalate, bringing unalterable damage to society (McLaren, 2017).

Social change is fomented when teachers are supported and empowered to equip students with the most powerful tool, which is education (Ahmad, n.d.). Furthermore, education is an instrument of change. Still, social change can only take place when humans need change (Patil, 2012) and when the actions are deliberate. Educational leaders apply strategies and ideas to develop students, teachers, communities, and societies (Callahan et al., 2012). Thus, this study can increase school leaders' awareness of instructional leadership practices, which they may use to conscientiously and consciously practice instructional leadership daily by coordinating curriculum, supervising teachers' classroom instructions, and indirectly increasing their students' academic achievement (Ismail et al., 2018).

### **Summary**

In conducting this basic qualitative study, I sought to explore the role that instructional leadership plays in increasing student achievement in public school in a British territory. This chapter served as an introduction to the study and included the

problem statement, the study's purpose, and the research question. A description of the components of the conceptual framework of Hallinger and Murphy's model of instructional leadership was also provided. The framework is described in more detail in Chapter 2. A synopsis of the methodology and protocols used for data collection and analysis were also discussed in this chapter. Additionally, the assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations of the study were provided. Finally, the significance of the study was discussed. In Chapter 2, I review the literature to provide the research context for the study. The chapter includes the research strategies I used to locate information related to the instructional leadership practices of administrators.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The problem that was addressed was a lack of instructional leadership in a British territory. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the role that instructional leadership plays in increasing student achievement in public schools in a British territory. Since the late 1970s, scholars have accepted instructional leadership as an influential leadership model that makes a difference in teaching and learning and makes schools more qualified (Hallinger et al., 2018; Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2018). As researchers of education have noted, a school's success impinges on instructional leaders who concentrate on improving teaching and learning (Alsaleh, 2019; Heaven & Bourne, 2016).

Empirical evidence shows that instructional leadership remains one of the most critical and enduring leadership models because of its demonstrated impact on the school, student achievement, and teachers (Day et al., 2016; Harris et al., 2017; Leithwood et al., 2020). The principal's role has changed, evolved, and expanded over the past 50 years from principals being building managers to becoming instructional leaders (Edmonds, 1979). The public sector's growing pressure to transform school systems into active learning environments has created increasingly complex roles for principals (Fullan, 2014; Tucker & Uline, 2015). As Fowler and Walter (2020) noted, early researchers of instructional leadership described the concept as a hierarchical situation in which decision-making about curriculum and instruction is purely top-down, but, in more recent studies, researchers have focused on the instructional leader as one who empowers others

to be leaders. Today, specifically in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, instructional leadership is a concept that defines a leadership role not only for the principal, but also for teachers who lead by constantly refining their own teaching, providing advice and expertise to colleagues through mentoring and continuing education (Amzat, 2017; Fowler & Walter, 2020). Instructional leadership is defined as understanding of the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and organizational capacity building skills. In this century, instructional leaders must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectuate change in schools (Amzat, 2017). Instructional leadership is now considered an ideal characteristic that principals worldwide need to demonstrate (Hallinger et al., 2015; Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2018).

Educational systems differ around the world, and because of these variances, instructional leadership must be studied in this British territory because scholars have warned researchers not to accept leadership practices from western contexts as the practices are questionable and sometimes futile (Noman et al., 2018). Truong et al. (2017) concurred that there is a global knowledge base that represents instructional leadership practices across a more diverse set of cultural contexts needs to emerge. Furthermore, although instructional leadership has been widely researched there is a still a gap as (a) the literature on instructional leadership is largely quantitative, (b) the leadership model is primarily examined at the elementary school level, and (c) there is a lack of consistency with regard to instructional leadership practices that increase student achievement and support teachers (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

In this chapter, I describe the literature search strategy that I used. I also discuss the conceptual framework of Hallinger and Murphy's instructional leadership model, which I used to examine principals' instructional leadership practices. The chapter also includes definitions of instructional leadership, the evolution of instructional leadership, and the instructional leadership practices (defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school-learning climate). The chapter concludes with a summary of key points.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In the literature review, I present arguments from a range of research studies to understand the location of research boundaries, to identify areas where knowledge is missing or contested, and to consider where future research may be undertaken. The purpose of the literature review for this study is to create familiarity with research on instructional leadership and student achievement and to provide a description of the conceptual framework and key concepts associated with the phenomenon of instructional leadership practices. This section begins with a description of the strategies used to find relevant and timely references for the study.

To locate research relevant to the study, I used a combination of electronic and print sources related to instructional leadership practices that were less than 5 years old. Rewhorn (2018) stated that most searches start online but cautioned that researchers must be aware of the reputation of the sources. The Walden University's Thoreau Library portal served as the primary gateway to access peer-reviewed journals and books. The following electronic databases were used: Academic Search Complete, ERIC, ProQuest

Central, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global, Sage Journal, and ProQuest EBook Central.

I used a keyword search to search the literature in a systematic manner. From the resources, I was able to identify the authors associated with instructional leadership: Hallinger, Murphy, Blasé and Blasé, Spillane, Leithwood, and Marzano. The broad search of the term *instructional leadership* produced a result of 11, 015 full-text articles; however, when results were refined to only include peer-reviewed articles and articles with a publication date within the last 5 years, the result was 3,641 works. The list was further refined by adding the concepts *school principal and pedagogy* to *instructional leadership*. This combination of concepts produced 68 peer- reviewed articles. I used the snowballing technique suggested by Rewhorn (2018) to gather more resources.

Snowballing involves building a bibliography of articles to follow up on or read using the reference list. This approach led me to other key words and phrases such as *principalship, school leadership and student outcome, principals and pedagogy, principal's perception of instructional leadership, instructional management, instructional leadership practices, mission statement, school climate, effective schools, leadership skills, school curriculum and leadership, and instructional time.*

I used Google School to access supplemental resources. Google Scholar provided access to a large number of databases and scholarly articles on the World Wide Web. The initial search within a 5-year parameter produced 51,600 materials, some of which were accessible for the current study. As a result of using this tool, additional unique articles were found. Although searches were time-bound within the 5-year parameter, studies

outside the period were also used to provide vital insights about instructional leadership. I was able to find copious research on instructional leadership and student achievement. The literature review includes both qualitative and quantitative research to address the gap and describe the specific instructional leadership practices principals need to use to increase student achievement. To address saturation or have enough sources and locate appropriate amounts of scholarly sources, I participated in a Zoom conference with the librarian from Walden University.

### **Conceptual Framework**

According to Ravitch and Carl (2019), defining the conceptual framework and informing the research study is important. Conceptual frameworks offer reasons why a study is significant and ties together the interrelated parts of a qualitative study (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Spillane (2015) posited that conceptual frameworks are a type of scaffolding that a researcher uses to highlight specific aspects of the phenomena under study. I used the instructional management framework developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) to explore the principal's instructional leadership practices that increase student achievement.

Several known instructional leadership frameworks that have emerged throughout the years (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Murphy, 1990; Weber, 1987). These frameworks have laid the foundation for the conceptualization of instructional leadership as a leading educational model. Bossert et al. (1982) developed the Instructional Management framework, which became an influential model that guides researchers interested in instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2011). The framework

developed during the effective school movement during the 1970s, provided an understanding of the effects of instructional management and principal's role (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The instructional management framework consists of three important roles of the school leader must perform for school effectiveness: (a) instructional organization, (b) school climate, and (c) principal management behavior. The school's instructional organization and climate help to shape teachers' behavior and students' learning experiences. Additionally, the principal's own management actions are shaped by factors external to the school- personal, school district, and community characteristics (Bossert et al., 1982).

The idea of instructional leadership was ambiguous until the 1980s (Gumus et al., 2018), but the framework developed by Bossert et al., (1982) influenced the development of other models of instructional leadership which sought to offer less vague understanding of the idea of instructional leadership (Gumus et al., 2018). Accordingly, Hallinger and Murphy (1985), Murphy (1990), and Weber (1987) advanced the important models of Instructional Leadership. The Hallinger and Murphy (1985) framework was developed from the results of their study. The participants for their research included principals, school staffs and central administration supervisors. They supplemented this data with organizational information extracted from school documents, such as observations of the principals during clinical assessments, narratives that describe activities the principal engaged in to support the curriculum and instruction in their schools, and faculty meeting minutes and agendas. The synthesis of questionnaire and the organizational information, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) created the Principal



Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), which consists of three dimensions and 11 job descriptors. The PIMRS was later revised, and the 11 instructional functions were reduced to 10 (Hallinger, 2011). The three dimensions in the framework are (a) define the school's mission, (b) manage the instructional program, and (c) develop a positive school learning climate (see Table 2).

According to Green (2017) findings from researchers Andrews et al., (1986) and Andrew et al., (1985) showed that there are specific behaviors and characteristics of principals that have a relationship to student achievement. Smith and Andrews (1989) define instructional leadership as a blend of supervision, staff development, and curriculum development. The authors further characterized a strong instructional leader as one who gives curriculum and instruction the highest priority, rallies and mobilized resources to enable the accomplishment of goals, and creates a climate of high expectations for academic achievement and respect for all students.

Weber synthesized research findings and translated them into an instructional leadership model for practitioners- principals, assistant principals, teachers, and others (Weber, 1987). Weber (1996, in Green, 2017) noted that the concept of instructional leadership had been researched from many different perspectives, but the results of studies suggest that instructional leadership is a “dynamic process” (p. 192). According to Green (2017) Weber’s framework contained factors that he felt would move the discussion from the dimensions emphasized in the frameworks addressing instructional management to more specific instructional leadership strategies. Weber’s (1996) model of instructional leadership extends Hallinger and Murphy’s (1985) model by identifying

five essential domains of instructional leadership: (a) defining the mission, (b) managing curriculum and instruction, (c) promoting a positive learning climate, (d) observing and improving instruction, and (e) assessing the instructional program. This model was consistent with both the Hallinger and Murphy (1985) which contained many of the same elements. The major difference between Weber's (1996) model and Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) model was the addition of the assessment function in which the instructional leader contributed to the planning, designing, administering, and analyzing assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum. Weber (1996) concludes, "The research suggests that even if an instructional leader were not packaged as a principal, it would still be necessary to designate such a leader" (p.254). Weber's model emphasizes collaboration and shared leadership (Adams, 2018). It then becomes the task of the principal to delegate responsibilities and match the responsibilities with the right person (Weber, 1987)

Murphy's comprehensive Leadership framework (1990) was developed from a synthesis of four major sources: the literature on effective schools, on school improvement, on staff development, and on organizational change (Adams, 2018). From this review, Murphy's model incorporated four dimensions of instructional leadership which were broken down into sixteen different behaviors. Murphy's four dimensions were: (1) developing mission and goals, (2) managing the educational production function, (3) promoting academic learning climate, and (4) developing a supportive work environment. The first three dimensions and behaviors mirrored the Hallinger and Murphy (1985) model (see Table 2), but a fourth dimension and five additional practices

were added. Although Murphy's model (1990) was developed through a synthesis of various literature, it has not been empirically tested (Adams, 2018).

Various instructional leadership models have identified and classified instructional leadership practices (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Murphy, 1990; Weber, 1987). However, although there are commonalities between the models, the researcher will focus on the model proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) to explore the principal's instructional leadership practices. The model was chosen since it has been the most commonly used by researchers and in empirical investigations about instructional leadership for the past 30 years (Geleta & Ababa, 2015; Senol & Lesinger, 2018) and Leithwood et al., (2004) postulate that the model has been the most researched. The review of research by Leithwood et al., (2004) suggests that the model of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) provides the most empirical evidence to date. According to Green (2017) the model is the only framework that has been empirically tested and over 110 empirical studies have used the framework to contribute to a more systematic knowledge base on the instructional leadership construct. Sheppard (1996) found that the leadership model fostered transformational characteristics and was affirmed in both elementary and high school settings as an accurate conceptualization of instructional leadership.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

#### **Definitions of Instructional Leadership**

The concept of instructional leadership has emerged over the years and research on the concept has increased in numbers (Kiranli Güngör & Aydin, 2019). Leithwood et al., (1999) posit that instructional leadership is the most frequently mentioned educational

leadership concept in North America. Although scholars have recognized the concept of instructional leadership as a necessity for effective school outcome, there continues to be conflicting definitions resulting in differences in instructional leadership practices (Powell, 2017). Many authors have tried to redefine the concept (Reitzug et al., 2008), but Salleh and Hatta (2019) suggest that one reason is because principal's role is getting more complex because it is always linked with change. Cuban (1988) concurs propounding that finding a consistent instructional leader is rare because the "DNA" of principals inevitably draws them back to their managerial and political roles and away from instructional leadership. With no precise definition of instructional leadership (Rigby, 2016), how this phenomenon is approached grows over time (Powell, 2017). Hallinger (1992) concurs that because instructional leadership means different things to different people, the term consistently has conceptual and practical limitations. School leaders have formulated their own definition based on their experience and expectation. This lack of a precise definition is one of the weaknesses in the research (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987) and has led to miscommunication, role conflict, and low principal evaluation ratings (Stronge et al., 2008). Ginsberg and Murphy (2002) declares that this miscommunication is perhaps the major obstacle for effective instructional leadership.

Scholars and educational leaders consider instructional leadership as critical in improving schools in the 21st century, therefore, a greater understanding of the concept is required and principles are encouraged to understand the concept so that the principles can be applied to their daily practice (Gonzales & Terosky, 2018). Although there is much research regarding instructional leadership, the definition still remains complex and

elusive (Vogel, 2018), broad and narrow (Bush & Glover, 2003; Yang, 1996). The narrow definition focuses on the knowledge and skills principals must possess to support academic outcomes exclusive of management practices. The broad definition of instructional leadership emphasizes integrating managerial behaviors and instructional practices to promote student learning (De Bevoise, 1984; Yang, 1996).

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) narrowly defines instructional leadership as an approach used by school leaders to focus on teachers' behavior in school activities that indirectly impacts academic achievement. Instructional leadership focuses on the academic progress of students, it is the principal's role to provide direction, resources, and support for the improvement of teaching and learning (Keefe & Jenkins, 1991), and finally it is the principal or teacher involvement in class interaction (Ali, 2017).

Researchers and authors have provided other narrow definitions of instructional leadership such as Keefe and Jenkins, Ch, Fullan et al., Leithwood, and Hallinger and Wong. Keefe and Jenkins (1991) narrowly defines instructional leadership as the principal providing the direction and support teachers and students will need to support teaching and learning. Ch (2018) refers to instructional leadership as distributed and shared leadership that is also an indicator of school improvement, academic change and learner accomplishment. Instructional leadership is a deliberate focus on strategies and actions principals use to increase student outcomes, build teachers' knowledge and skills and emphasize intentional use of data and evidence based strategies to support program coherence (Fullan et al., 2018; Hallinger & Wang, 2015).

Lahui-Ako, Vogel and Van Deventer, Gorton and Schneider, Hallinger and Murphy, and Steel have presented broad definitions of instructional leadership. Van Deventer (2016) posits that instructional leadership is a broad term used to describe the leadership and management of aspects of a school that directly influence learner achievement. Lahui-Ako (2001) states that instructional leadership is closely related to the principal's role of developing and disseminating school aims, setting targeted standards, and coordinating curriculum. Also related are supervising and evaluating teachers' classroom instructions and increasing teachers' and administration staff's PD. Instructional leadership is the act of aiming to achieve success in the teaching-learning process (Steel, 2013, in Özdemir et al., 2020), raising successful students for the society, providing the desired conditions for learning and teaching, increasing the satisfaction of school staff and transforming the school into a productive environment (Gorton & Schneider, 1991). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) defined instructional leadership as the principal's behavior to promote and improve schools' teaching and learning process related to teachers, students, parents, school plans, and management. One of the broadest definitions of instructional leadership was proposed by researchers Hallinger and Murphy (2013). The researchers stated, "Today we view instructional leadership as an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teaching and learning" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013, p. 7). This definition includes the three dimensions of instructional leadership: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional

program, and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

### **Evolution of Instructional Leadership**

The instructional leadership model has a long history that was primarily rooted in the United States (Salo et al., 2015). The term's origin can be traced back to the late 1970s when scholars began to investigate why some schools were able to overcome challenges and experience positive outcomes for all students (Hallinger, 2010). Researchers compared schools that were located in poor urban neighborhoods, served students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and operated in challenging circumstances (Hallinger et al., 2015; Kiranli Güngör & Aydin, 2019). They found that schools having the same characteristics (size, ethnic background etc.) differ in school achievement. This concern led to an investigation which later gave rise to the effective school movement (Edmonds, 1979, 1982). This movement sought to explain why schools performed at a higher than expected level (Eubanks & Levine, 1983). The movement's result revealed a list of effective school characteristics, and instructional leadership was identified as the hallmark of instructionally effective schools (Bossert et al., 1982). One of the first researcher that advanced research on effective schools was Ronald R. Edmonds. In a summarization of research Edmonds (1979, 1982 in Mixon- Harris, 2018) identified five characteristics that correlates with effective schools: (a) the leadership of the principal is characterized by their leadership and attention to the quality of instruction (b) there is a pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus; (c) an orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning; (d) teacher behaviors convey the expectation

that all students are to obtain at least minimum mastery; and (e) pupil achievement is used as the measure for program evaluation. Therefore, instructionally effective schools are controlled by principals who are instructional leaders, who are directive, disciplinarians, and assertive in his/her institutional leadership role (Edmonds in Hallinger et al., 2015). As proposed by Edmonds, the articulation of instructionally effective schools, advanced a new era of research and principal leadership policies (Hallinger et al., 2015) and generated a focus on how schools were managed and the processes needed to improve student outcomes. This focus created policies on principal leadership in general and a new concept known as instructional leadership evolved (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger et al., 2015).

The instructional leadership movement became popular in the 1980s and further studies about the instructional leadership role carried out by principals emerged (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Lashway (2002) states that in the 1980s instructional leadership became the leading model for school leaders after researchers noticed principals who maintained a high focus on curriculum and instruction had successful schools. Researchers such as Bossert et al., (1982), Tyack and Hansot (1982) and Hallinger and Murphy (1985) in their studies moved the description of instructional leadership beyond personal characteristics to focus on general behaviors of principals in ineffective schools (Neumerski, 2013). Successful principals systematically monitored student progress and were highly visible (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). They were assertive and strong disciplinarians (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), and they were experts in curricular development and teaching and generated a common vision among their staff



(Tyack & Hansot, 1982). They visited classes, observed teaching, and then responded to those observations (Bossert et al., 1982). As interest in principals' instructional role blossomed, the principal's instructional leadership role remained poorly understood and ill-defined (Bossert et al., 1982). According to research, the lack of a definition resulted from research lacking a conceptual framework that clearly outlined the critical dimensions of instructional leadership and the absence of a reliable measurement instrument (Bridges, 1967, 1982). In 1985, Hallinger and Murphy were enlisted to study and measure instructional management behaviors and the emerging findings led to the development of the first instruments to measure principal instructional leadership, PIMRS (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The PIMRS consists of 71 items, segmented into three sections- defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting the school learning climate. The instrument was designed to be used by both researchers and school practitioners (principals, teachers, and district administrators). The outcome from Hallinger and Murphy's research was three-fold: instructional management and instructional leadership occurred synonymously, a principal who ranked highly in one area ranked highly on other job subscales, and the development of the PIMRS advanced the necessary movement from description to measurement of instructional leadership (Greb, 2011).

The conception of Instructional leadership of the 1970s and 1980s changed during the first half of the 1990s as researchers began to focus on leadership models that are more consistent with the trends in educational reform. Due to school improvement, concerns were raised about instructional leadership being too directive and principal-

centered (Hallinger et al., 2015), and thus a second restructuring movement arose in North America. The goal of restructuring was to professionalize education, empower teachers as professionals, and build staff capacity as a strategy for school improvement (Hallinger et al., 2015). During this advent of school restructuring and the turn of the twenty-first century, principal leadership researchers began to popularize transformational leadership. Theoretical conception of Transformational leadership emphasizes the leader's role in empowering others, increasing parent and teacher participation in decision making, enhancing teacher leadership, and support changes in teaching and learning practices (Hallinger et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2017). As a multidimensional concept in educational settings, transformational leadership is strongly linked with school development, learning and vision (Anderson, 2017; Hallinger et al., 2015). As a transformational leader, the principal effectively manages teaching and learning, because they strategically include and ensure all stakeholders have an active role in the process (Day et al., 2016). Transformational leaders set clear and ambitious goals that are effectively communicated to their teams and steer and direct individuals in the right direction to find their strengths and maximize their potential (Onorato, 2013). Early advocates of school transformational leadership highlighted their dissatisfaction with the instructional model which they believed focused too much on the principal as the center of power and authority (Hallinger, 2003). Furthermore, researchers have concluded that the effects of instructional leadership on student achievement are more noticeable than transformational leadership, primarily because it places more of an emphasis on the quality of teachers and their teaching (Cruickshank, 2017).

Hallinger et al., (2015) posit that the questions remained, what should be the focus of school leadership? Should principals focus on improving teaching and learning (instructional leadership) or attend more broadly to building capacity for improvement (transformational leadership)? Hallinger et al., (2015) posited that both leadership styles share many commonalities such as shared vision, creating a climate of high expectations, innovation and continual improvement; providing staff with opportunities for intellectual stimulation and meaningful PD; and the leader acting as a role-model. However, according to Hallinger (2003) the differences between the two models lie in their characteristics:

- a top-down versus bottom-up approach (the extent to which the principal emphasizes a coordination and control strategy vs. an empowerment strategy)
- target of change (first-order or second-order effects)
- managerial versus transformational relationship to staff (the degree to which leadership is located in an individual [i.e., instructional leader] or is shared [i.e., transformational])

Day et al., (2016) added to the distinction by stating that transformational leadership emphasizes vision and inspiration. Through instructional leadership, administrators are able to establish educational goals, plan the curriculum, and evaluate teachers and teaching.

In the 2000s instructional leadership emerged as the leading perspective adopted again by researchers (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Researchers also found that instructional leadership was a stronger predictor of school improvement than transformational

leadership (Hallinger, 2005). A meta-analytic study comparing instructional leadership and transformational leadership, (Robinson et al., 2008) found that instructional leadership is more effective than transformational leadership, as measured by student outcomes. In a study informed by a data set comprising 37 schools, Shatzer et al., (2014) compared the effect of transformational and instructional leadership on student achievement in the United States. They reported that instructional leadership explained more of the variance in student achievement than did transformational leadership.

Also, results from the research conducted by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), indicate that transformational leadership significantly impacts teacher classroom practices but not student achievement. The findings further motivated researchers to investigate the concept of instructional leadership and to redefine it again (Hallinger, 2005).

### **Instructional Leadership Practices**

The role of the principal has evolved and expanded over the past 20 years. Principals are now expected to demonstrate instructional leadership practices (Hallinger et al., 2015) and keep pace with education reform and the growing accountability movement. Southworth (2002) asserts that in the 1970s, a principal's role was supervising and administering the school. In the 1990s and 2000s, the role changed to the school administrator and instructional leadership (Hallinger et al., 2015; Harris et al., 2017); transformational leader (Day et al., 2016), and a professional leader who focuses on teaching and learning, monitors classrooms and give feedback (Salleh & Hatta, 2018). The principals as instructional leaders are now expected to shift between the roles and responsibilities (Heaven & Bourne, 2016).

School leaders are under tremendous pressure to increase student achievement in a high-stakes testing environment. This requires them to devote the majority of their attention to serving as the school's instructional leader. However, time constraints, new demands, more complex decisions, and lack of knowledge and expertise often prevent them from fully engaging in this role (Hallinger, 2005; Mestry, 2017). A principal's day is usually filled with diverse administrative and management functions such as procuring resources, managing learner discipline, resolving conflicts with parents, and dealing with the unexpected teacher and learner crises (Mestry, 2017). Therefore, many school principals experience great difficulty in balancing their diverse administrative duties with their instructional leadership functions. According to Mestry (2017), because of the lack of time for and an understanding of their instructional leadership functions, most leaders spend relatively little time in classrooms and even less time analyzing curriculum delivery with teachers. While they may arrange a time for teachers' meetings and PD programs, they rarely provide intellectual leadership for growth on instructional issues. The findings from research conducted by Huang et al., (2020) found that American middle school principal's job continues to be administration-bound, spontaneous, and fragmented. Research indicates that for school outcomes to be positively impacted, instructional leaders have to spend most of their time in instructional leadership practices (Murphy et al., 2016; Şişman, 2016). Geleta and Ababa (2015) posit that principals devoted only one-tenth of their time to instructional leadership practices.

The discussion about instructional leadership practices is not exhaustive, as the term instructional leadership is interpreted in varied ways based on the practices of

school leaders in different context. Although there are different interpretations, the consensus among scholars is that instructional leadership practices are contributing factors that support teachers and increased student achievement (Alsaleh, 2019; Day et al., 2016; Hallinger et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2017; Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2018). Firestone and Wilson (1989) in Kumar (2019) argue that strong leadership directly and indirectly impacts teacher development and student performance. Principals' direct practices as instructional leaders are productive and consider individual differences among both teachers and students (Kumar, 2019). Examples of an indirect practice are using data to monitor students' progress; and, framing their goals. In contrast, the indirect influences are promoted through intervening channels, such as through policies. Day et al., (2016) and Park et al., (2019) suggest that a principal leadership effect on student achievement is indirectly mediated by teacher characteristics: teacher collaboration, teacher instruction, teacher capacity and motivation, teacher-student interaction, and professional culture. Through the indirect approach, the principal can shape the desired behavior in teachers and students. Examples of direct practices of instructional leadership include observation, walkthroughs, supervising classroom instruction. Park et al., (2019) posit more research is needed to identify the direct and indirect effects of principal leadership on student achievement via school climate and teacher behaviors and practices

Scholars agree that school principals' instructional leadership practices have to be intensified, as evidence suggests that there is a definite link between high-quality leadership and successful schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 2005; Harris et al., 2017; Mestry, 2017). Almost four decades of research have asserted the importance of

leadership related to student achievement and school outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Hallinger et al., 2018; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Although it is clear that instructional leadership is an important characteristic of schools and the instructional leader is a key factor in student achievement, there is still a struggle to identify the practices that define the role of the instructional leader. There is still a lack of consistency and clarity regarding these practices or their classification (Quinn, 2002). Mestry (2017) states that most principals lack a comprehensive understanding of instructional leadership practices, which negatively impacts learner performance and, consequently, the institution's academic standards. Principals as instructional leaders should have the confidence and the necessary skills to engage in productive and respectful conversations with teachers about the quality of teaching and learning (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015). As Hallinger and Heck (1998) acknowledged, "If the impact of principal leadership is achieved through an indirect means, we must advance our understanding of how principal shapes such linkages." The importance of principals and their daily practices in creating supportive environments for teachers and students has received increased attention from policy makers and other entities interested in improving education. Although teachers' instructional role is a primary determinant of student achievement, there is evidence from research that the school leader's role is pivotal in enabling teachers to improve student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). The context and needs of a school will determine the practices principals will use to increase student achievement and other areas of concern. For example, a principal might focus on increasing collaboration with teachers or using data to increase student achievement, while in another context, a principal might

use data to drive instruction (Buske & Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, 2019). These assertions imply that instructional leadership practices should include the different needs of a school and should aim to improve teaching and learning.

### ***Dimension 1: Definition of the School Mission***

In schools, the mission matters. Foreman and Maranto (2018) comment that the mission in public schools' mission matters, because it bridges the organizational culture and the organizational goals. This dimension includes two primary jobs for the principal or instructional leader: Framing the school's goal and communicating the school goals (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). While this dimension may seem as less important than other instructional leadership practices, research suggests otherwise (Sanchez, 2019). In their study of Israeli principals in elementary community schools, Goldring and Pasternack (1994) found that the principal's role in setting the school's goals were more involved in creating school effectiveness directly related to teaching and learning. The articulation of a mission statement is essential to strategic planning for any organization and an important point to start for successful strategy implementation (Gurley et al., 2015; Rey & Bastons, 2018). In the late 1970s to the early 1980s mission statements found a place in education, and accreditation entities began requiring mission statements to be a part of schools as a tool to measure school performance and goals.

There has been a call from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund; the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development ; and leading academics for schools to become more than academic institution and places that promote the well-being



of both students and teachers (Allen et al., 2018). Researchers have found that mission is an integral part of any institution and that the principal most influential effect is his or her ability to shape the school's mission (Chapple, 2015; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Keefe, 2020). The mission's process begins with the instructional leader's values, beliefs, and desire to contribute to the community in a meaningful way (Frumkin et al., 2011). School missions rarely evolve without the guiding hands of the principal (Murphy & Torre, 2015), therefore the principal is important in setting the tone of the school. Scholars over the past twenty years have affirmed that the school instructional leader must be dedicated to the mission of the school as it is the lens to which the organization views their relationship between all stakeholders (Goldring et al., 2009; Keefe, 2020; Marzano et al., 2005). Researchers assert that the assumption of this dimension is not that the principal defines the school's mission alone, however it proposes that the principal is responsible for ensuring that an academic mission exists and ensuring its effective communication to staff, students, and the community (Hallinger et al., 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 1998)

Although the concept of a mission is well understood, inconsistent definitions still exist because no two institutions or managers agree on the same definition. Perfetto et al., (2013) state that variations may be found by the type of institution- public, private, and charter. The author cited scholars Ausbrooks et al., (2005) who found that there were strong variations between charter school mission statement in Texas while Bishop (in Foreman & Maranto, 2018) observed little variation and but instead saw evidence of copying, borrowing, or reliance on a small number of mission statement. Because of their individuality, schools should have coherent missions fostered by their policies. However,

because politics have increased principals' democratic regulations, most school's missions are considered broad, complex, and sometimes controversial (Foreman & Maranto, 2018). Ingle et al., (2020) concur and state that educational leaders find themselves seeking to balance the demands of local constituents- students, parents, teachers, school board members, community members, and business leaders- with the demand of state and national policy makers.

Scholars suggest that mission statements are least productive when there is a lack of agreement about their intended role (Davies & Glaister, 1997). A mission is a body of determined and used goals to bring vision to life (Senol & Lesinger, 2018). It is a marketing tool used to state the institution's philosophies, describes curricula, pedagogical styles and teaching methodologies (Lubienski & Lee, 2016). It gives an organization an identity, defines who they are, why they exist, and what they do (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015). It is through the mission that a school can share their worldview, what they aspire to accomplish, create a sense of belonging, inspire and transmit with clarity how all stakeholders are to act in accordance with the values of the organization (King et al., 2013; Lin, 2012). Rozycki (2004) described missions as "happy talk: sweet slogans that enervate clear definitions of goals, that obscure inquiry into their achievability, and that have provoked the 'fad diet' of standardized testing, teacher accountability, and lockstep curriculum" (2004, p. 94).

The mission statement of a school is the purpose of education. It is why schools exist and reflect schooling's purpose (Ng et al., 2015). The school, like any other organization, have staff, clients, and an agenda. Therefore, the mission is needed to help

clarify the school's purpose and goals for both the organization and those the organization serves. Bartkus et al., (2004) suggest that mission statements should guide the non-routine decision making and may be used as a control mechanism to ensure that everything and everyone is working towards shared objectives. These non-routine decisions consist of decisions that are part of the institution's typical day-to-day operations; thus the instructional leader is able to arrive at decisions or possible solutions through the lens provided by the mission statement. During a typical school day, there will be myriad responsibilities for principals, administrators, and teachers.

Organizations need to be focused to not to get lost in the endless stream of tasks. McClees (2016) posits that an organization can experience disaster if there is no clear focus. When educators lose sight of the one written purpose for the entire school- the mission- the result is the creation of polluted work climate, confusion, lack of support, bad attitudes, lack of work ethic and no unifying purpose for both the individual and the organization as a whole (McClees, 2016). The author compares the lack of focus to an individual wasting time taking a road trip without a clear objective, and unfortunately, many organizations without a mission will mimic this problem

When educators are focused on the mission, the relationship between the school's purpose and teacher behavior can be aligned with that of their peers. When leaders are dedicated to the mission, they can attract, retain, and motivate talented and hardworking employees who might take more lucrative posts elsewhere (Foreman & Maranto, 2018). The dedication to the mission can also help determine how to allocate resources. Studies show that a framed mission statement is capable of making differences in an institution.

Therefore, principals who have a clear vision, clear learning goals, and high expectations for all students significantly impact student achievement. Sun and Leithwood (2015), after reviewing 110 studies, found that setting the school goals and mission is an essential approach principals need to positively take to influence academic achievement and outcomes positively. The review of empirical leadership from 40 studies between 1980 and 1985, revealed that school goals showed up with consistency as a significant factor interacting with principal leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). In his quantitative research Quin et al., (2015), found that the most significant differences between low and high performing organizations are the leadership practices, particularly inspiring a shared vision and challenging the process. The school leader is the guardian of the mission. Regardless of the school's service stakeholders, the instructional leader needs to refer to the mission statement when making decisions (Fayad & Yoshida, 2014). The mission statement according to Holosko et al., (2015) "is the organization's life blood or their *raison d'être*, and this prominent statement ideally encapsulates the essence of what any organization strives to achieve" (p. 223). As Drucker (1989) underscores organizations are not defined by their "name, statutes, or articles of incorporation" they are defined by their mission, their purpose, and their reason for being.

**Framing of the School Goal.** Geleta and Ababa (2015), Hallinger and Murphy (1985), and Salleh (2013) posit that framing the goals refers to a principal's role in working with stakeholders to create goals that are measurable and identify the areas on which staff will focus their attention which must involve the academic progress of students. The framing of the school goals as a function of the principal is the foundation

of developing a well-performing school. Through a well-framed mission, instructional leaders can strategically plan, set the tone for the goals to be achieved, and determine the strategies they will use to tackle the goals. Hicks (2014) states that framing clear goals refers to the principal's ability to determine the exact areas that require resources and focus on the goal(s) to be accomplished. The framing of school goals goes beyond a mission statement. It involves what the school wishes to achieve within a specific timeframe, most often within the given school year, concerning improvement of student achievement, implementing specific programs or reforms (Meyer et al., 2019). The framing of school goals must clarify who is responsible, what is being measured and how often it should be measured. Setting direction accounts for the most significant proportion of a leader's impact. Principals must not just know what is important, they must know what is essential (Waters & Grubb, 2005). Goal setting is just the beginning for the instructional leader and a well-structured strategic plan with ambitious goals must be in place to support the goal. In the book, *Ten Traits of Highly Effective Principals*, McEwan (2003) explained the principal's role in framing school goals. He explained that the principal must approach framing school goals from a collaborative perspective by including faculty and staff in the framing process (cited in Hicks, 2014).

The framing of clear, achievable, and measurable school-wide goals is an essential task of an effective instructional leader (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). It is widely recognized as a core leadership practice (Meyer et al., 2019). Leaders need to consider the school's own internal improvement needs, resources, and staff capacities when framing goals. Thus, as the institution's instructional leader, the

principal, must be a great fit for the organization, fully embrace the mission and be highly engaged. According to researchers (Garland, 2018; Kumar, 2019; Meyer et al., 2019), principals who set high academic goals are ranked as high achieving principals who reap high levels of student success. In contrast, principals who set low academic goals are ranked low achieving principals who reap lower student attainment.

Effective goal-setting is characterized by the instructional leader creating a few specific and clear goals. Salleh (2013) states that a goal framed should be few so that the staff's energy and other resources can be efficiently mobilized. Meyer et al., (2020) found that New Zealand school leaders often set too many unspecific goals and struggle to keep a sustained focus on their goals over the year. The researchers found that only about half of the senior leaders and less than half of the middle leaders could accurately recall their school goals at the end of the year. Furthermore, the school's goal focus frequently decreased over the year. When there is a lack of goal clarity, a misalignment of improvement strategies, and the limited capacity of schools to keep a sustained focus on goal achievement, then there will be a barrier to school improvement (Meyer et al., 2020). Greer and Weekley (2017) claim that one primary barrier to school improvement is when instructional leaders drift away from the mission or are only interested in parts of the mission. The instructional leader cannot have a personal agenda when framing the mission as it will have a negative impact on its objective or focus (Fuller, 2019). In mixed-method research, Stemler et al., (2011) quantitatively compared 421 mission statements and interviewed principals to evaluate their perspectives on school mission

statements' usefulness. The research findings indicate that principals regard mission statements as an important tool for shaping practice and communicating core values.

Messina (2018) states that the words matter in mission statements. The deliberate choice of words can increase understanding within a group and influence attitudes (Cook, 2001). Holosko et al. (2015) claim that well-written mission statements typically answer the following key questions: (1) Who are we? (2) What do we do? (3) What makes us unique? and (4) What are our core values? The mission statement should define the fundamental purpose of a school (Messina, 2018). It is why the school exists and reflects schooling's purpose (Ng et al., 2015). From the analysis of 35 years of work, Murphy and Torre (2015), concluded that for schools to be productive, the mission framed should have eight core values: (a) a sense of hope (b) commitment to success (c) asset-based thinking (d) student focus (e) academically anchored (f) outcome-focused missions (g) continuous improvement, and finally (h) collective responsibility. Goals that adhere to the descriptions presented by Murphy and Torre (2015) solidifies action around shared values and purpose and signals the importance to all stakeholders (Robinson et al., 2008). They reduce staff distraction so that there is more focus and productivity (Goldenberg, 2004) and help principals coordinate actions in complex situations (Robinson et al., 2008). Furthermore, they encourage educators to aim for higher standards, strengthen commitment and responsibility, and dismantle the wall between teaching and administration (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013).

A critical practice of the instructional leaders is to ensure that the mission framed is clear and focused. Researchers agree and postulate that focus is critical when creating

goals. The concentration should be on monitoring specific goals that include instructional leadership, instruction, assessment, curriculum, rigorous learning and high expectations (Goldring et al., 2009; Holomshek, 2019; Murphy, 2010). Collins and Porras (1991) stated the mission must be crisp, clear, engaging, provokes emotion, generates excitement, and grabs people in the gut. Stone (1996) states, “like wine, words can describe a company’s mission in some detail, but the real test comes when you taste it” (p. 36). The mission must inspire stakeholders towards the same goal; it should be believable and achievable. The mission should come to life so that teachers, parents, students, and community partners can produce an image in their minds (Brown et al., 2004).

Researchers continue to show that the school mission statement statement’s framing is influenced by politics, cultural beliefs, and values. Chapple (2015) and Holomshek (2019) postulate that school leaders should demonstrate their adherence to political policies, and the themes of mission could help dictate the values that are studied within the mission statement. In a study, Chapple (2015) examined the content and common themes of 150 primary school mission statements in New Zealand and Japan. The data collect was used to identify how the posted mission statements in Japan and New Zealand reflected each country's philosophy of education, as found in recent governmental policies. The researcher concluded that New Zealand and Japan principals attempt to balance the government's visions and personal traditions and cultural values. For example, in New Zealand, the mission incorporated more political policies while schools in Japan chose to remain faithful to older traditions. In a study, the relationship



between the mission statements, the viewpoint of school administrators, and the goals of education as identified by the government of Oman were examined (Al-Ani & Ismail, 2015). A sample of 161 school mission statements was randomly collected from the Ministry of Education school mission portal database. The researchers' analysis revealed that elementary schools in Oman incorporated Islamic ethical and moral values. It also appears that school principals spend significant efforts on designing school mission statements that directed schools towards achieving their purpose and improving their performance.

Research has revealed that mission statements do not necessarily indicate school performance or actions of a school. However, other studies revealed that the theme of academic success was found in the mission of most successful schools (Al-Ani & Ismail, 2015; Perfetto et al., 2013). For example, Perfetto et al., (2013), used 50 mission statements from high and low performing high schools. An analysis of the content of mission statements identified 31 dominant themes, which include student learning, community, academics, preparing, productive, success, lifelong learning, excellence, skills, society, diversity, future, partnership, and lifelong learning.

Goal framing is a collaborative process, which means there is wide participation of stakeholders – staff, teachers, parents, and past and present students (Kumar, 2019; Salleh, 2013). It is recommended that everyone collaborate or be involved in formulating mission statements because better goals are developed when everyone work together rather than the principal working alone (Kumar, 2019). Vinitwatanakhun and Sawatsupaphon (2019) recommend that the principal ultimately spearhead goal-

identification as a core task and supported by stakeholders that direct the overall decision-making process. The principal and all stakeholders should collaborate in what Warren Bennis (1997) called Great Groups. Great Groups can be defined as a composition of individuals who work together with impressive results and are inspired by the belief that their shared mission is focused on a cause greater than themselves (Warren Bennis, 1997). The author further states that Great Groups begins with a shared dream. Individuals' job becomes a fervent quest with a strong commitment to a shared mission and confidence that they can be successful in collaborative efforts to reach mission-driven goals.

Murphy and Torre (2015) cite evidence for the principal as the key figure in the creation of guiding statements, but emphasize that principals initiate and guide, rather than impose, the creation of guiding statements. When all stakeholders participate in framing the school's goals, the institution and all who are involved benefit in several ways such as higher morale, a stronger willingness to accept new ideas, and the fear of using and understanding data and its application concerning goal setting will be removed. When employees feel aligned their workplace mission statements they feel more engaged in their jobs and more productive. When teachers agree with their school's mission statements, their productivity level and level of commitment will increase, thus positively influencing the quality of teaching within their classrooms. Cook (2001) claims that a teacher's commitment to a school's mission is essential for the success of the school in fulfilling its mission. When Teachers lack the knowledge of the mission statement, understanding the mission is left to individuals' interpretation, which may not be accurate

and is unlikely to be uniform throughout the community (Messina, 2018). The lack of partnership in and different interpretations can make schools look more concerned with providing students' academic expectations than providing students with the tools to understand their current or future roles within the community (Özdem, 2011). Bernhardt (2015) reports on the development of an improvement plan by a school in Hawaii. The analysis of data provided by teachers at the school identified problems that had negative effects on school improvement efforts. Teachers noted that the school's mission was interpreted in many different ways by faculty members, and thus there was a negative impact on school improvement efforts. The staff agreed that their current mission statement was too long and that they needed a new one that drove them toward improvement.

Although the stakeholders' input is essential when framing goals, Hallinger (2012) proclaims that this is not always the case in most schools. Hallinger and Murphy (1985), from a study of 10 elementary teachers, found that teachers' involvement in establishing and communicating school goals was limited. Researchers have concluded that when administrators and teachers collaborate to develop clear goals, the primary responsibility becomes educating all students. From a survey of 1500 teachers from 46 elementary schools, Devos et al., (2014) concluded that teachers who shared similar goals with their principals were able to trust each other and be involved in their schools. Covey and Gullede (1994) aver that there is no commitment in formulating mission statements, so involving the majority of stakeholders creates unity, commitment, and enrollment. Additionally, stakeholders' involvement creates a frame of reference in people's minds

and a set of guidelines by which they will govern themselves and employees that are included find it easier to work together and respect each other, which benefits the organization as a whole (Covey & Gullledge, 1994).

**Communication of the School Goal.** When the school goals are framed, the instructional leader's role is to communicate the goals to stakeholders as that they know what the goals are and the path the organization will take to get there. Communicating the school goals focuses on the techniques used by building principals to communicate the school goals to teachers and students (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Communicating the school goals connects the stakeholders with the purpose. Although the principal does not unilaterally create the mission, his or her role is to ensure that it exists and is communicated effectively (Hallinger & Murphy, 2010). All organizations are encouraged to write and use mission statements, but to be successful, organizations cannot just write words on a piece of paper; they have to find ways to manage them (Fuller, 2019). Allison (2017) sees the simplest term of mission statements as "just a collection of words" but posits that the words only begin to be useful when communicated to others. The communication of the school goals to teachers, students, and parents is one of the most important attributes of an instructional leader and is the hallmark dimension of high performing schools (Goldring & Pasternack, 1994; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Communication is defined as a process by which a sender conveys various types of information to a receiver (Wikaningrum & Yuniawan, 2018). Marzano and Waters (2009) define communication as the principal's accessibility to all stakeholders and the staff members having access to one another. Communication is important when leading,

and principals need to utilize communication skills to coordinate activities within the organization, share information in putting forward facts, data, instructions, direction, and build trust and acceptance of the message receiver (Wikaningrum & Yuniawan, 2018). The frequent communication of school missions by instructional leaders promotes accountability, personal ownership, and instructional improvement. Research shows a direct link between communicating goals and improved instruction and achievement (Goldring et al., 2009; Leitner, 1994). In his research, Leitner (1994) found that principals who communicated school goals in low socio-economic schools positively affected student achievement.

A mission statement's effectiveness depends on the instructional leaders' ability to ensure that all stakeholders clearly understand the school mission and its content and that the message is permeated externally and internally frequently and purposefully. The instructional leader's ability to communicate the school goals will determine his/ her impact on teacher development and student achievement (Kumar, 2019). Murphy and Torre (2015) assert that the instructional leader must ensure that the school goals are communicated and periodically reviewed throughout the school year, especially as it relates to instruction, curriculum, and the school budget. How principals disseminate information can determine the extent of the impact on teachers and, ultimately students. By communicating the goal or the mission to stakeholders, the principal can effectively promote success for all students. The communication with all audiences served by the schools is important: therefore, principals must communicate

such expectations to teachers because all stakeholder's lives become better when there is effective communication

Messina (2018) concurs and states to provide consistent focus on a school's mission, the mission statement should be visible, verbalized, and put into action. The principal manages an overwhelming list of demands that require exceptional communication skills that seek to accomplish four goals (a) inform stakeholders of the issues within the organization, (b) involve others so they will conform to the values and mission, (c) ignite passion, and (d) allow people the autonomy to contribute without fear, repercussion or retribution (Cascio, 2017). Kumar (2019) posits that instructional leaders' role in communicating school-wide goals is pivotal and is communicated through formal and informal ways to all stakeholders. Additionally, Tyler (2016) states instructional leaders spend up to 80% of their time in interpersonal communication, primarily face-to-face, telephone, and the volume of daily email communication. An instructional leader who is mission-driven communicates the mission through formal communication, including staff bulletin, newsletter, staff meetings, parent and teacher conferences, school handbooks, assemblies, and school letterheads (Hallinger et al., 2015; Kumar, 2019). The school administrator further publicized goals through informal channels with parents, students, teachers, and the community. The instructional leader can use conversation with staff, parents, and students to focus on the school goals and mission. Through conferences and curricular meetings, the principal can show staff how the school goals interact with instruction, curriculum, budgetary decisions, and the school's success (Hallinger et al., 2015; Kumar, 2019). Sparks (2008) found four predominant techniques

used by charismatic leaders to influence the audience and illustrate main points: humor, telling stories, reading an audience, and working the room. Storytelling (of a personal nature especially) is a way leaders must communicate the vision to the entire team and reinforce it through coaching, meetings, and recognition and rewards (Kelley, 2008). To achieve the vision, the leader must work collaboratively with all stakeholders by sharing their vision and creating a shared vision with their team.

Messina (2018) states that the mission statement should be routinely communicated because regular and brief reminders of the purpose increase productivity by 100%. When the mission is communicated effectively the community will witness how well the school is performing based on what they say they will do, and people will begin to invest their resources and time as well. As the mission is shared, it sparks interest with all stakeholders, and they will become motivated to become more engaged, motivated, and enthusiastic about working together and helping the organization reach the dream (Gooding, 2012).

### ***Dimension 2: Management of the Instructional Program***

This second dimension is critical as it focuses on the coordination and control of instruction and curriculum (Hallinger, et al., 2015). This dimension incorporates three leadership functions: Supervising and evaluating instructions, Coordinating curriculum, and monitoring students' development (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The instructional program management involves the principal working with teachers in areas related to curriculum and instruction (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This dimension also requires principals to be expertise in teaching and learning, instruction, and assessment (Jenkins,

2009) and be committed to the school improvement (Hallinger, 2010). classroom assessments are the foundation of a truly effective system in this era of accountability and it has been concluded that a well prepared principal ensures that assessments are of high quality and used effectively. Managing the instructional program requires the principal to be an instructional resource by modeling expected behaviors for teachers, observing innovative curriculum and teaching practices, and providing opportunities for teachers to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and skills to improve instruction (Smith & Addison, 2013). According to Hallinger (2010) this dimension originated the anxiety among critics of the instructional model in the 1980s, because critics questioned principals' instructional expertise and the time that they will have to engage in their role as instructional leaders. Spillane (2015) states that managing instruction is a complex and multi-faceted practice but it is fundamentally about instruction and improvement. Although classroom instruction has the greatest school level impact on student achievement, leadership has the second greatest effect (Leithwood et al., 2004).

**Supervision and Evaluation of Instruction.** The supervision and evaluation of instruction is a core responsibility of an instructional leader. The principal job behaviors of this function include: (1) classroom observation; (2) aligning instructional focus with school goals; (3) monitoring and reviewing student performance; and (4) providing written assessment of instructional strengths and weaknesses to teachers (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). In this era of reform and accountability, supervision and evaluating instruction is one of the practices of the school principal. It refers to the process of observing and evaluating teachers (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). While supervision and



evaluation practices are closely linked, and the terms are used interchangeably, they serve different roles. Both concepts are addressed based on the principal's knowledge and skill. The supervision of instruction is a crucial factor in teacher and student work, and for years, there have been continuous discussions about the correct definition, purposes, role, and function of supervision. Supervision is the general leadership function focused on ongoing support, teacher improvement, and teacher professional growth (Mette et al., 2015). Supervision is a formative process focused primarily on teachers reflecting on improving their practice and not being evaluated. The evaluation of instruction is typically viewed as a summative process, focused on assessment of performance (Mette et al., 2015). It is a primary tool used by organizations for personnel decision, including tenure and employment (Oliva & Pawlas, 2004). Therefore, a quality evaluation system helps identify high-quality teachers, because without quality teachers the education system would be impeded. Supervision as a formative process and evaluation as a summative process are both the responsibility of the instructional leader. There have been numerous models about supervision in the literature, and the models have explicitly focused on providing classroom teachers with feedback about their instructional practice (Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007). Principals of the 21st century are expected to spend time in the classroom observing teachers and interacting with students. The supervision of instruction is assumed to involve walkthroughs, observation of teaching and learning, ongoing dialogue with teachers about their instructional practice and ongoing support of teachers in the form of PD (Lochmiller, 2016; Zepeda, 2016). There is a common agreement that the observation of teaching has some advantages as a source of data for

teacher supervision and evaluation (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016). According to literature, many strategies are used to develop teachers, but classroom observation practice is reported as unique among options because it is a common and essential practice (O'Leary & Brooks, 2014), it has a high level of face validity (Cohen & Goldhaber, 2016), and it is the only practice that provides data on the actual teacher performance as they interact directly with students. Additionally, researchers have found that using observation is fairer than just using test scores when evaluating teachers, because observations provides an opportunity for diagnosis and feedback for PD. It reveals which teaching practices need improvement (Jones, & Bergin, 2019). For observation to be effective the principal must conduct observations frequently and feedback must be given to teachers immediately. Marshall (2013) contends that the administrator should have a particular area of focus, communicated to the teacher in advance, and after observing the teacher, the administrator should provide written, specific feedback and recommendations for improvement to the teacher.

Another type of observation that has been touted as an efficient way to gather data on instructional practices is walkthroughs. Walkthroughs are brief, frequent, informal and focus visits to classroom by observers for the purpose of gathering data on educational practices (Kachur et al., 2013). It is observations that engage teachers in reflective and critical thinking about their instructional practices while cultivating a collaborative environment between teacher and observer (Sullivan & Glanz, 2009). The classroom walkthrough process is a very important process that instructional leaders use to systematically gather data and get a focused snapshot of teaching and learning in a

classroom and judge the effectiveness of the instructional program. Kachur et al., (2013) postulate that walkthroughs enable administrators to record information on instructional materials and strategies, curriculum and standards, lesson objectives, student engagement, behavior management, and more. Regardless, walkthroughs should center on the essential elements of brevity, focus, and dialogue. In a large urban district study, district leaders and principals reported that walkthrough data gave them a better understanding of how teachers supported students and the academic program (David, 2007). In another study in Lincoln, researchers found that walkthroughs drive instruction, resulted in dramatic gains in standardized and criterion-referenced achievement scores for Northeast High School's 2,200 students (Skretta & Fisher, 2002).

The walkthrough and observation process does not only include frequent informal classroom visits, but timely feedback, and follow up. Marzano et al., (2005) state "Creating a system that provides feedback is at the core of the responsibility of monitoring/evaluating" (p. 55). Kachur et al., (2013) comment that if walkthroughs are going to improve teaching and learning, written, oral form, formal or informal follow-up to teachers is essential. Timely feedback provides opportunity for both teacher and principals to discuss the classroom practices that were observed. According to Kubicek (2015) giving and getting feedback about one's work in the classroom is powerful for instructional improvement and professional recognition. Downey et al., (2004) aver that focused feedback is the most powerful staff development approach available to impact and change behavior. Kachur et al., (2013) declare that "All teachers, including superstars, are hungry for feedback" (p. 71). In a study, Scott (2012) found that

walkthroughs positively affect teacher confidence about their instruction and improve the relationship between teachers and principals. The study the teachers believed that the feedback they received has helped them improve in their classroom. Marshall (2013) suggests that principals should have a substantive follow-up conversation about instructional practices seen in classrooms and each observation should also be accompanied by a brief write-up after a walkthrough observation. For walkthroughs to be effective the feedback must be timely so that teachers can begin making plans to improve instruction and the administrator can begin to support teachers personally and professionally.

Even though observations and walkthroughs are tools to improve teachers' performance, negative outcomes can also accompany walkthroughs. DuFour and Mattos (2013) states that principal's current responsibilities and the numerous demands placed on them, have created time restraints and have affected their ability to implement tasks associated with instructional leadership, including walkthroughs. As a result of time constraints, some researchers have contended that walkthroughs are of little value to teachers because a small amount of teaching is observed. Additionally, the focus of the observation rarely focuses on student engagement (Kubicek, 2015; Marshall, 2013) and feedback is not timely, specific or positive. In addition, a principals' knowledge base of content areas or limited knowledge of a teacher's practice may act as a barrier to effective supervision implementation. When the knowledge is limited observations and conversations become performative and teachers lose faith in the instructional leader and the walkthrough process (Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). David (2007) posits that if teachers

perceived the process to be superficial, they will lose confidence in his purpose and value, and will dismiss it as “drive- bys” or “gotchas.” This inevitably will increase distrust and tension, frustration, decrease in self-efficacy and motivation (David, 2007; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998).

Kubicek (2015) criticized the viability of the walkthrough in which administrators make short visits to classrooms using a checklist of things to look for. According to the authors although administrators' awareness increased, the feedback they give is of dubious value, the practice is antithetical to the purposes of instructional rounds and profoundly anti-professional (Kubicek, 2015). While checklists are common, they may not be the best because they can narrow the scope and vision within the classroom (Downey et al., 2004). According to Marzano et al., (2011) “In our experience many teachers prefer anecdotal feedback to numeric ratings particularly when walkthroughs are being conducted” (p. 60). Valli and Buese’s 4-year study of 150 teachers found that walkthroughs heightened teachers’ anxiety as teams visit their classrooms and teachers begin to feel under pressure and fear being singled out for doing something wrong (Barrett, 2009). Another drawback to walkthroughs is that principals may “act as a know it all,” and sometimes have no suggestions regarding instruction and classroom management (Kubicek, 2015).

**Coordination of the School Curriculum.** Coordinating the curriculum is a part of Hallinger’s (2003) second dimension of instructional leadership. Within the job function of coordinate the curriculum, principals identify stakeholders responsible for curriculum development, utilize assessments to shape and drive curriculum development,

and participate actively in curricular review (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The curriculum is the foundation of an educational institution, and its implementation can be a good indicator of a school's educational efficacy (Changiz, et al., 2019). Nugraheni (2015) The curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements concerning the purpose, content and learning materials and how to use as a guide for learning activities to achieve specific educational goals. Offorma (2016) defines curriculum as the document, plan or blue print for instructional guidance which is used for teaching and learning to bring about positive and desirable learner behavior change. The author further denotes that curriculum is a program as one cannot talk about curriculum without referring to the program of studies, which is seen in form of subjects, contents, subject matters and bodies of knowledge. These definition relates to instructional leadership as it shows that the principals should be about setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization around high-quality curricula and instruction (Leithwood et al., 2004). DeMatthews (2014) asserts that effective principals recognize that assessments, unit plans, and daily lessons align with standards. These systems are developed, monitored, evaluated, and adjusted to increase teacher and student performance. The principal's strong curriculum leadership plays a crucial role implementing a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Even though the principal may not be a content specialist, they need to know the content areas. The school principal as an instructional leader provides curricular direction; therefore, they must interact with teachers within and across grade levels on instructional and curricular issues. They must work with educators to define curriculum aims and strategies to attain

the curriculum goals, observe educators, support, and provide them with instructional guidance.

A relevant school curriculum is developed according to the needs of the community and the learners (Gunawan, 2017). The curriculum of the public school is about understanding the relations among academic knowledge, the state of society, and the character of the historical moment in which we live, in which others have lived, and in which our descendants will someday live (Gunawan, 2017; Offorma, 2016). In 2016, Finland's curriculum was updated because the Finnish realized that the impact of globalization and the need for a sustainable future were reshaping the fundamentals of schooling. To meet the future challenges, they realize they need to focus on cross-curricular competencies (a vision of the desirable future and the development of both society and education) and work across school subjects (Halinen et al., 2015). The school curriculum is the instrument through which schools strive to translate the demands and aspirations of the society in which they function into concrete realities and when the learners have acquired the pre-competencies they will become functional citizens of their society (Offorma, 2016).

The school curriculum must be thoroughly planned and should make provision for compulsory and optional learning activities in the form of examination and non-examination subjects and suitable after-school activities. According to Offorma (2016), when planning a curriculum, the following elements are considered: the learner, the teacher, the society, philosophy of education, the psychology of learning, examinations, the economy of the society, resources, subject specialists, and values. All these factors

are to be considered as nothing can be done in education without recourse to society's culture, which hinges on their demands and aspirations. Therefore, the instructional leader must be aware of the different types of curriculum to meet the needs of society. Researchers assert that there are different types of curriculum: the intended curriculum, the enacted curriculum, the implemented curriculum, and the attained curriculum (DiPaola & Hoy, 2013; Remillard & Heck, 2014). The *intended curriculum* is the content specified by the district or the state to be taught to a particular grade level. It includes the teacher's aims and the decisions made to envision and plan instruction (DiPaola & Hoy, 2013; Remillard & Heck, 2014). The *enacted curriculum* represents the collection of experiences that actually occur in the classroom (Stein et al., 2007). Remillard and Heck (2014) assert, the interactions between teachers and students around the tasks designed for each lesson or unit. The enacted curriculum is influenced by factors such as the intended curriculum, instructional resources, the students' prior experiences, and the teacher's responses to these factors (Remillard & Heck, 2014). The *implemented curriculum* refers to the teacher's content from the curriculum and the *attained curriculum* to the material that the students learned (DiPaola & Hoy, 2013). The gap between the intended curriculum and the implemented curriculum is a significant factor in student achievement, and good instructional leader should be able to identify the gap and close it (DiPaola & Hoy, 2013).

Monitoring and supporting curriculum implementation are crucial management functions of the school principal. The monitoring of the curriculum involves focusing on teaching and learning, the effectiveness of teachers, the quality of work, and to show



which targets and standards are achieved across the whole school. The importance of the principal's role in monitoring and supporting curriculum has never been greater, taking into consideration national accountability standards for schools and the likelihood that principal job vacancies will increase in the near future (Stronge et al., 2008). Reys (2008), after spending 10 years supporting middle schools implementing reform mathematics curriculum in an NSF funded project called the Show-Me Project reported the significance of a strong school leader. Reys explained that strong leadership greatly enhances the successful implementation of the curriculum, and the early and continuous support from administrators is particularly critical for teachers who otherwise may be less willing to try new materials and/or instructional ideas. Furthermore, the findings from a study conducted by Onuma (2016) and Yurdakul (2015) revealed that a school principal's failure to monitor instruction effectively could harm teaching and learning and curriculum implementation. If a principal intends to increase students' achievement, they must ensure that the school's curriculum is being implemented with fidelity because this improves pedagogy and the overall quality of education.

Stronge et al., (2008), in their book *Qualities of Effective Principals*, related what scholars have to say about the principal's role in monitoring curriculum and instruction. The authors indicate that effective principals monitor the implementation of curriculum standards and make sure they are taught (Fink & Resnick, 2001). They also model behaviors that they expect of school staff and spend time in classrooms to effectively monitor and encourage curriculum implementation and quality instructional practices (Marzano et al., 2005). Additionally, ineffective schools, principals can judge the quality

of teaching and share an in-depth knowledge of instruction with teachers; they promote coherence in the instructional program where teachers and students follow a common curriculum framework (Stronge et al., 2008). They trust teachers to implement instruction effectively, but they also monitor instruction with frequent classroom visits to verify the results (Stronge et al., 2008).

The principal needs to be aware of the changing conceptions of curriculum, educational philosophies and beliefs, curricular sources, and curricular evaluation and improvement. To do this, the principal needs to be not only a head teacher or principal teacher, but he/she must be the school's head learner (Hallinger, 2003). The principal should keep abreast of new conceptions concerning curriculum by attending curriculum workshops with his/her teachers, which will assist him/her in giving the teachers the necessary support to implement the curriculum. In their research Nader et al., (2019), purposively interviewed 14 head teachers about their role in the successful execution of the curriculum. One head teacher opined that the principal's main role is to ensure that the curriculum is well implemented in their schools and that teachers are adherent to those changes by changing their teaching methods. Another head teacher states that the principal is the key person in the successful execution of the curriculum, and it is best when the head teacher is involved in curriculum development. Finally, another head teacher posits that the role of a head teacher in implementing curriculum includes but is not limited to confirming that all teaching staff are aware and trained in the curriculum. The head teacher also needs to acquire an in-depth understanding of the curriculum. Research on the role of the principal as instructional leader shows that principals must

possess an array of skills and competencies to lead schools effectively towards the accomplishment of educational goals. One of these skills is monitoring the curriculum and instruction. The principal as an instructional leader must be involved and knowledgeable about the curriculum in a school and should assist educators in altering, rearranging, and reinterpret the curriculum (Mazibuko, 2004). Thus, as the lead instructional leader, the principal must influence teaching and learning, whether intentional or not, ensuring that learners receive quality teaching by ensuring that educators have the necessary knowledge and resources to facilitate learning (Mazibuko, 2004). This monitoring of instruction suggests that school principals should ensure that their role as instructional leaders is always given priority as it addresses the school's purpose namely teaching and learning.

Lee et al. (2018) used a case study approach to review the experiences of two schools in Hong Kong. The researchers drew on international evidence and identified key challenges and difficulties in school-based curriculum reform in three areas: intellectual, structural, and cultural. Structurally, Lee et al., (2018) found that many teachers have wasted their time 're-inventing the wheel' when developing school-based curricula. This effort has left them without sufficient time and energy to be effective in teaching. The researchers also found that intellectually there is a lack of a strong shared knowledge base for curriculum development, which has resulted in the fragmented and shallow curriculum (Lee et al., 2018). Culturally, reliance on the school principal curriculum reform has prevented the development of a new culture in which teachers have the autonomy to make changes in their daily practices. Without cultural changes, the changes

necessary for pedagogical reform and student achievement improvement will not be sustainable or effective (Lee et al., 2018).

Murphy (1990) pointed out that administrators have reported that the curriculum and instruction aspects of instructional leadership are the most challenging areas to provide leadership because curriculum and instruction are open to several interpretations, such as what curriculum should encompass and what content is essential. Le Fevre and Robinson (2015) found that leaders who lacked content knowledge about effective teaching practices about high-quality curriculum were less likely to be successful in supporting student learning within their schools. Additionally, they found that many school leaders were reluctant to discuss ineffective practice with teachers directly, and many leaders avoided these conversations and permitted poor quality instruction to continue. Murphy (1990) opined that principals in high achieving schools might know more about curriculum and instruction than their counterparts in low-achieving schools. This knowledge of curriculum and instruction is translated into active involvement with the specification, alignment, and coordination of curricular programs. Additionally, Rossow and Warner (2000) assert that a large school principal may be too busy to run curriculum meetings or may feel insufficiently trained in the content area to run a curriculum project. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) wrote that the new curriculum and instruction strategies remain outside the principal's repertoire, further weakening their knowledge base for instructional leadership which, weakens their instructional leadership credibility. Curriculum leadership is an area of instructional leadership that has not received much attention. Research has shown that our system lacks strong curricular

guidance, and if there is no leadership, the principal's vision does not get reflected while the curriculum is being implemented (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Singh, 2018). Principals need to understand and monitor the curriculum in their building to lead successful schools (DeMatthews, 2014). School principals are often not clear about their role as curriculum leaders; they assume that their role is to only look into the functioning of the schools (Singh, 2018).

**Monitoring of Student Progress.** The monitoring of student progress is another important practice that is strongly associated with student achievement. One of the central components of instructional leadership is using data to raise achievement (Halverson et al., 2007). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) described this function of the instructional leader as returning test results on time, discussing test results with the staff at grade levels and as individuals, and providing analysis for the performance scores. The authors further defined monitor student progress as behaviors needed to monitor and improve student achievements (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The National Center of Student Progress Monitoring (2007) in Hopkins (2020) defined progress monitoring as a practice based on the student's ability to perform academically and track if the instruction is effective with regards to the assessment.

According to Garland (2018), managing the instructional program must include a process for monitoring progress towards the school goals, the impact of the curriculum on student learning, and the use of the data to make informed decisions. During this time of accountability, school principals have to maintain effective instructional schools that emphasize student achievement. Hallinger (2005) claims that the expectation is that

school leaders intervene in accountability-driven development to improve teachers' practices and ensure that student performance meets the administration's accountability targets. School leaders are expected to engage in data analysis and support their teachers in using data to drive instruction (Gelderblom et al., 2016; Neumerski, 2013). Data analysis aims is to understand how students learn best and determine how students will excel.

Data utilization is critical when monitoring student progress as it may be used to enhance student achievement both systematically and on an individual student level (Lashley & Stickl, 2016). Buske and Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia (2019) state that data use forms the foundation of instructional leaders' actions. For the purpose of this dissertation, the term data is defined as any factual quantitative or qualitative, standardized or informal, formative or summative information that is systematically collected and relates to the functioning of a school and its teachers and the learning outcomes of its students (Buske & Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, 2019; Gelderblom et al., 2016). The definition of "data" is in opposition to the narrow definition in education, which was mostly quantitative. Scholars just viewing and analyzing quantitative data can blind both administrators and teachers from other crucial and valuable data to students' learning experience (Hopkins, 2020). Data can also be further delineated as internal and external data. Internal data are findings on class and school activities, for example, internal school evaluation, while external data is the empirically proven data which are generated externally such as comparative tests and statewide learning assessment (Buske & Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, 2019). Instructional leaders can obtain data from multiple sources,

including student achievement measures, achievement-related data, and disaggregated data. Instructional leaders can utilize these sources of data to help improve various aspects of the school environment, including achievement, behavior, attendance rates, and post-secondary preparation (Lashley & Stickl, 2016). Data utilization has become a critical component of instructional leadership in schools.

In an era of accountability, linked to test scores and standards, school principals are mandated to maintain an instructionally effective school. According to Yoon (2016) providing credible information based on actual data is critical for educators to solve problems and change their practices. The use of data combined with educators' professional knowledge can contribute to achievement in schools and design PD (Schildkamp et al., 2019; Van Geel et al., 2016). Effective principals use data to guide their leadership, identify priorities for action, compare their school's performance against other schools, set targets, and reflect on their school's improvement efforts. As part of instructional leadership, principals are expected to demonstrate "data leadership," a term that was developed in the literature on instructional leadership by Roegman et al., (2018). The term "data leadership" enables researchers to conceptualize instructional leaders' data literacy and data use, as well as the support of teachers' data literacy and data use (Roegman et al., 2018). Through the systematic analysis of multiple data sources, leaders can make informed and knowledgeable decisions that can foster student growth and performance (Gelderblom et al., 2016; Lashey, 2016). Rhoads (2019) through a mixed methods research sought to understand the relationship between educational leaders' leadership efficacy, data use, efficacy in data use and student achievement in K-12. The

quantitative data results indicated several relationships among data use confidence and educational leadership efficacy and educational leadership efficacy and data use. However, the variables did not have a relationship with the student achievement variable. Also, qualitative findings indicate that educational leaders perceived data practices critical to instructional and school improvement.

A new wave of data use, which has been studied in many countries worldwide, such as Belgium, Canada, Norway, Netherlands, Germany, and Trinidad and Tobago (Schildkamp et al., 2019). Demski and Racherbäumer (2017) claim that German students' poor performance in international student assessment has led to calls to enhance evidence-based practice in the German educational system. Their research, a comparison of schools in different circumstances, and the application of 13 different sources of information that can inform teachers' and school leaders' practice showed that German practitioners use of data is limited, and practitioners attributed little usefulness to a standards-based reform and consequently hardly used these data. The researchers also concluded that data use might be lower in schools in challenging circumstances, and the little data use is due to a lack of time. Van Geel et al., (2016) postulate that despite growing international interest in using data to improve education, few studies examining the effects on student achievement are yet available. In their research, they investigated the impact of a two-year data-based decision-making intervention on student achievement growth. Fifty-three primary schools participated in the project. The data analysis suggests that the intervention significantly improved students' performances in low socioeconomic status schools.



In education, school leaders play a critical role in the performance of students. Researchers have posited that school leaders have the second highest influence on student performance (Harris et al., 2017; Ismail et al., 2018; Marzano et al., 2005). The shifting role of the Principal from manager to instructional leader has placed student learning and performance at the core of their responsibilities. Principals are responsible for monitoring student progress and improving student achievement by utilizing standardized assessment data and data that provides information on the functioning of schools such as classroom assessment data, classroom observations, and student focus groups (Schildkamp et al., 2019).

Researchers support the importance of meaningful data in educational settings (Schildkamp et al., 2019; Van Geel et al., 2016), however other researchers have reported the struggles of instructional leaders to utilize data effectively (Buske & Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, 2019; Yoon, 2016). According to Wayman et al., (2012), School leaders can both enable or hinder data use. School leaders can hinder data use due to their lack of knowledge and skills and their lack of organizational capacity to use data effectively. Schildkamp et al., (2019) added that instructional leaders can also hinder data use when they do not meet teachers in time to discuss data that will improve instruction but use the data to “blame and shame” teachers.

Although the goal of data use is to understand how children learn and to ensure academic excellence for all children, Tomlinson (2001) questions the most efficient method to attain these goals as the implementation of data use is not a simple process for many schools. Many instructional leaders face many challenges or barriers that impede

data from being used effectively: lack of training, lack of time, the lack of basic statistical principles needed to analyze data, the amount of data available, technology, and the resistance to change in the existing culture (Neumerski, 2013; Rhoads, 2019; Rowlett, 2018; Shaw, 2017). In addition, Rhoads (2019) mentioned other barriers such as data located in multiple databases, making it difficult to link data for analysis, and the lack of a clear vision or strategic plan for data decision making. Shaw (2017) also reported that even though teachers recognized the impact of data-driven instruction on student learning, they still resist data analysis because of some of the same reasons mentioned by Rhoads (2019). Teachers are fearful of results being used to evaluate them, and some teachers are hampered by their ability to successfully engage with data at the classroom level.

Researchers have recommended other ways instructional leaders can improve their data use (Hopkins, 2020; Rhoads, 2019; Rowlett, 2018; Schildkamp et al., 2019). Rowlett (2018) emphasized that strong leadership is critical to implementing data by instructional principals. As a result of the abundance of data, instructional leaders must help teachers understand and make sense of the data. Leaders must first reflect on data to improve student learning and instructional responses and then develop the conditions needed to support data use and provide opportunities to build teacher expertise and data literacy (Marsh & Farrell, 2015). The Instructional leader must also create a vision and culture for data use. The school vision is the second dimension of Hallinger & Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model, while culture is a part of the third dimension. Mandinach (2012) states that having no vision for the institution can be a barrier to data use because,

without vision, teachers will rely on their ideas, opinions, and perception (Little, 2012; Marsh & Farrell, 2015). Another way to improve the use of data is through PD focused on increasing data literacy. Instructional Leaders can develop data management systems to provide ongoing training to all faculty and staff and implement PD for teachers related to data use (Schildkamp et al., 2019). Instructional leaders trained in using data can provide high-quality PD so that there will be a better outcome for both teacher and students (Mandinach & Gummer, 2013). The PD offered can include educating faculty about data types, data tools, and translating data into usable information.

Students' achievement results from the effective monitoring of teaching and learning programs; therefore, school-level data about how teachers and students perform is essential. However, the data will not advance teaching and learning unless effectively used (Mandinach & Jackson, 2012). Leaders, must connect with classroom practitioners to effectively drive change and to successfully monitor student progress. Accordingly, Buske and Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia (2019) recommend that instructional leaders “develop an inquiry habit of mind,” which means instructional leaders have an open mind and think critically. Research has suggested that instructional leaders who have a vision of how data should be used in their schools support teachers by providing useful tools and other resources, hiring coaches, and organizing meetings for discussions (Coburn & Turner, 2011). Blink (2014) concurs, stating that for teachers to reflect on data, instructional leaders must provide them with the tools needed to collect, analyze, and interpret data. Hopkins (2020) posits that the only way teachers will invest their time and effort into the data disaggregation process is if instructional leaders are knowledgeable

about the process and discuss its importance. The provision of support to teachers from instructional leaders related to data implementation indicates understanding and recognition of the teachers' concerns and needs (Schildkamp et al., 2019). Instructional leaders can further satisfy teachers' needs by establishing structures that promote regular, consistent, and collaborative data use in schools (Wayman et al., 2012). Shaw (2017) states that to make assessment meaningful, the principal must engage in discussion regarding improving instructional practice and to meet teachers during grade level meetings to look at results from unit assessments and during which teachers can discuss, ask questions, analyze the results, compare data, and collaboratively create plans of action. Principals must create a structured accountability system that will ensure the assessment data improves instruction. Cooper and Green (2019) analyzed a high performing Georgia Title 1 high school principal who used data to significantly improve student achievement. Their findings identified numerous methods that contributed to students' success who were short on credit to accelerate their learning or graduate. Some of the successful methods identified included teacher in data meetings, clearly communicating information, encouraging teachers to innovate instructional practices, and finally initiating center to directly help students excel.

### ***Dimension 3: Promotion of a Positive School Learning Climate***

Research has shown that having a positive school learning climate sets the foundation for teaching and learning (Akram et al., 2018; Garland, 2018). Researchers have given various definitions of school climate. The school climate is the school characteristics that differentiate one school from another and which impact both behavior

and school personnel (Akram et al., 2018). Loukas (2007) states that it is difficult to provide a concise definition of climate. However, he agrees with other researchers that climate is a multidimensional construct that includes the physical, social and academic dimensions. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) define climate as the culmination of collective attitudes of group members. According to Theisinger (2020), extensive research in education shows a relationship between school climate and school outcomes, including academics, social, emotional, and physical health. Developing a positive school learning climate is the third dimension in Hallinger's instructional leadership model and comprises half of the entire model (Kumar, 2019). This dimension is the broadest as it relates to its scope and purpose, and it contains a multitude of leadership practices that contribute to student achievement (Hallinger et al., 2015; White, 2016). Of the three dimensions of Hallinger and Murphy's instructional leadership model, this dimension is the one that best predicts school performance (Rainey, 2019). This dimension includes keeping an orderly environment, establishing clear rules for student behavior, addressing disruptive behavior, which are all practices that help protect teachers' instructional time (White, 2016). This dimension includes five functions: Protecting instructional time, promoting PD, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for students and learning. The five functions explain that effective schools are concerned with creating "academic press" (Hallinger et al., 2018, 2015) through holding instructional leaders accountable for establishing high standards and practices aligned to a culture of continuous improvement, an environment conducive to teaching and learning and celebrating success. Kumar (2019) postulates that to create an

academic press, the instructional leader must have practical and excellent interpersonal skills. Research also shows that school principals who practice good interpersonal skills can positively affect teachers and students (Kumar, 2019).

This dimension's five functions are intended to push the instructional leader, model values and practices, create a climate that supports the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, and a culture in which rewards are aligned with purposes and practices (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Creating a positive school climate originates at the administrative level and then trickles down through interactions with teachers and students. Research on school climate proclaims that there are four dimensions of school climate: Physical and emotional safety, quality of teaching and learning, relationships and collaboration, and the structural environment (Cohen et al., 2009). The literature further adds that the school climate depends on strong leadership that builds shared goals, and establishes trust, collegiality, openness, and trust (Price, 2012). Furthermore, strong leadership promotes quality and professional relationships within the school and is consistent with benevolence, honesty, and competence (Castro Silva et al., 2017; Price & Moolenaar, 2015). The creation and sustaining of an impactful school climate and culture remains the school leader's responsibility, and an inclusive school program cannot be successful without the principal's support (Alnasser, 2019; Guy, 2020).

**Protection of Instructional Time.** To improve education one area on which the education sector focus is time. Today public educators are held more accountable for student learning outcomes and are charged with increasing expectations and ensuring that all students meet learning performance standards. Research indicates that to achieve the

objective of efficient instructional time is to optimize instructional time (Hallinger et al., 2015; Kraft & Monti-Nussbaum, 2020; Kumar, 2019). Instructional time is defined by Phelps et al., (2012) as allocated time (the total time by law that schools are required to deliver instruction, typically on the order of 180 days a year), enacted time (the time that is spent in the classroom) and possible time (the days when both a student and his or her teacher are present in school for instruction to take place). As early as 1963, the seminal work *A model of School Learning* hypothesized that actual time spent learning and the time a student needs to learn are important determinants in achievement (Carroll, 2018). In 1983, the report *A Nation at Risk*, brought the nation of America to the issue of ineffective use of class time and attribute the unproductive use of time as a contributing factor to America's declining educational performance (Kraft & Monti-Nussbaum, 2020). Phelps et al., (2012) found that interruptions and off task behavior erode between 10% to 30% of possible learning time. Leonard (1999) reported that his findings of schools in North American schools were not different from the studies he undertook in Canada in 1999 and 2001. In 1999 Leonard observed 91 class periods across 12 schools in rural Western Canada and reported that students experienced an average of 12 interruptions per day. The researcher found a challenge to improve learning environments and enhance student growth because of the misuse of scheduled class time and the regular encroachments from outside classroom parameters that erode instructional time and minimize learning opportunities.

Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2020) opined that the criticism of the frequent interruptions to classroom learning remains relevant now, as it was six decades ago. The

interruption to instructional time are either internal (direct control of teachers, e.g., student off-task behavior) or external (not under the direct control of classroom teachers). Studies and the personal opinions of educators have described the external intrusion as "exasperating," "pedagogical disasters," and an "insidious waste of instructional time" (Kraft & Monti-Nussbaum, 2020). In a study of the frequency, nature, and duration of external interruptions in the Province, Public School District (PPSD) and estimated that a typical classroom in the district is interrupted over 2,000 times per year, which results in the loss of 20 days of instructional time (Kraft & Monti-Nussbaum, 2020). Commonly identified sources of external interruptions include public announcements during instructional time, unscheduled visitations by other teachers, students, and parents; the movements of students outside the classroom during instructional time, telephone calls to classroom phones, fire drills, and student pull-outs (Kraft & Monti-Nussbaum, 2020; Kumar, 2019). The unnecessary interruptions undercut teachers' ability to maintain their lesson momentum, require them to reteach material, and impedes education progress. Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2020) propounded that even brief interruptions could snowball into prolonged distractions. Examples given are a short intercom announcement about the honor roll led to a debate about which students had earned honors or a birthday wish by a visiting teacher-led to a long debate among students about how old their teacher was (Kraft, 2020). These small interruptions can directly affect student learning and negatively affect information recall, task performance, and even completing a sequenced task (Altmann et al., 2014). As Matthew Clavel (2003), a teacher in the South



Bronx, described, “After each disruption had run its course, I had to fight to establish order again” (Kraft & Monti-Nussbaum, 2020, p. 27).

Teachers need blocks of uninterrupted instructional time; therefore, it becomes the school principal’s responsibility to ensure that unimportant tasks do not interfere with academic instruction time or the teaching-learning process. Hallinger et al., (2015) maintain that classroom management and instructional skills will not improve or be optimized if there are frequent interruptions. Consequently, various researchers call on instructional leaders or principals to protect instructional time (Geleta & Ababa, 2015; Hallinger et al., 2015). Research examining instructional leadership practices have identified protecting learning time from external interruptions as a critical leadership practice associated with higher student achievement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Waters et al., 2003). One common assumption in education is that the more time children attend to something, the better they should learn the material. The principal, as the instructional leader, must play a role in protecting instruction and instructional time. Louis et al., (2010) state that principals that are deemed effective ensure that both adults and children in their school put learning at the center of their lives (Porter in White, 2016). Scholars have equated this as creating a healthy, safe, supportive, and positive school learning environment (White, 2016). Price (2012) explained that principals could keep unimportant tasks that do not serve the goals of the school away from the classroom and ensure that barriers of time and space do not interfere with instruction or time on task. Geleta and Ababa (2015) and Hallinger et al., (2015) postulate that the principal can control interruptions by developing and enforcing school-wide policies as principals who

successfully implement policies can increase allocated learning time and student achievement.

Conversely, there is numerous research that suggests that school principals seldom engage in protecting instructional time. Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2020) contends that external interruptions go unaddressed for the most part because principals substantially underestimate the frequency and adverse effects of interruptions. In the Providence high schools, administrators reported an average of 8.8 external interruptions per day relative to 11.9 for teachers and 16.3 for students, and in the high schools' administrators estimated 58% fewer interruptions per day than was reported that occurred (Kraft & Monti-Nussbaum, 2020). Leonard (2001, 2003) surveyed teachers in Saskatchewan, Canada, and Louisiana. He found that more than half of the teachers surveyed estimated their classes were interrupted three to four times each day, with intercom announcements being the most frequent source of interruptions. However, administrators in Louisiana reported that their schools were interrupted only once or twice daily, a lower rate reported by teachers.

Influential leaders work tirelessly with staff to ensure that the precious resource- instructional time- is maximized. Instructional leaders can begin by regularly visiting classrooms and working with teachers to get a clearer picture of what is happening in classrooms and reduce interruptions (Kraft, 2020). Furthermore, instructional leaders can make sure that the great bulk of the instructional time is devoted to instructional activities and that non-instructional activities are minimized. Instructional leaders who allow external interruptions to go unchecked communicates an implicit disregard for the value

of teachers' work and students' learning time (Kumar, 2019). Furthermore, instructional leaders should consider the data, decide as a school community what the norms around external interruptions should be, which external interruptions are necessary, and which should be eliminated. Also, instructional leaders should develop an organizational approach to reducing interruptions, tracking how well it works, and adjusting accordingly. Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2020) declare that the existing evidence suggests that teachers and students would benefit if they had the opportunity to work and learn in environments where external interruptions were less frequent. The researchers suggest that instructional leaders can protect instructional time by defining the type of announcements allowed over the intercom system and using daily assemblies and advisory periods as alternative ways to make announcements and deliver information to individual students. Additionally, the instructional leader can establish clear, school-wide norms about when and for what purposes intercom announcements, phone calls, and classroom visits are acceptable. Finally, instructional leaders can encourage school personnel to reduce or eliminate calls to classroom phones by shifting all non-urgent communication with teachers to email or text messages.

Researchers have expressed the importance of protecting instructional time. As the school's instructional leader, the school principal must demonstrate respect for instruction time by encouraging teachers to use all possible teaching and learning time meaningfully. As one teacher observed by Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2020) suggested, schools need to do everything possible to "hold instructional time sacred."

**Promotion of Professional Development.** The school instructional leader plays a critical role in the growth and development of their school. Scholars assert that principals concerned about their school climate and instruction will evaluate how instruction is delivered, the teachers' professional growth, the increase of student achievement, and the quality education that the student receives (Terosky, 2016). By promoting a positive school climate, the principal should have a mindset related to PD, or staff's continuous development (Sanchez, 2019). Instructional leaders should be continuously involved in promoting PD, which would affect school outcomes. Salleh and Hatta (2019) posit that promoting teachers' PD is the most influential instructional leadership practice at both the elementary and high school levels. Schleicher (2018) states that "the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teacher and their work" (p.79); therefore, if a school wants to grow, the school personnel need to reinforce the need for teachers to learn and grow.

*PD* in the literature is used interchangeably with terms such as *staff development*, *in-service training*, and *continuing education*. In recent literature, it is called professional learning community (PLC; DuFour & DuFour, 2013). Although the terms are used interchangeably, the purpose remains the same: developing and building human capacity (Kumar, 2019). Over the years, numerous efforts are placed on reforming PD to focus on teacher and student learning; consequently, expanding the definition to include more collaborative efforts. The definition of PD continues to evolve and change due to the widespread research on PD, the evolving needs of teachers, and the shifting focus of research from PD to a focus on professional learning (PL; Lieberman & Miller, 2014;

Smith, 2017). One of the earliest definitions of PD was offered by Guskey. The researcher defined PD as “the processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so they might, in turn, improve the learning of students” (Guskey, 1999). Kreider (2017) defines PD as the formal training provided to educators to enhance their professional capacity in areas such as curriculum, assessment, instruction, pedagogy, and technology. For this research, the terms *professional learning (PL)* and *professional development (PD)* will be used interchangeably, with the preferred, more current term being *professional learning*.

PD in the educational field serves many purposes. According to Kreider (2017) PD plays a critical role in enhancing teachers' ability to deliver quality instruction to students. Therefore, PD activities should provide teachers with learning opportunities to deepen and extend their competence, build their capacity, and improve student learning (Durksen et al., 2017). The best PD are described as those that bring about changes in teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2016; Kreider, 2017; Purvis et al., 2019). As school districts, the Department of Education, and schools design and implement PD, they must acknowledge schools and teachers' needs. Just as students need differentiated instruction, teachers need differentiated PD that focuses on the district, school, team, and individual needs (Purvis et al., 2019). The original intention of PD was to improve student learning outcomes and the quality of teaching. Additionally, PD was to enhance teacher expertise, facilitate organizational change, support local school improvement efforts, support educational reform, and enhance the quality and impact of teaching and administration (Bredeson, 2003; Wicks, 2017). Furthermore, several studies have examined a PD's

critical objective, examining the link between content knowledge and pedagogy (Brown, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2016; Durksen et al., 2017; Kreider, 2017; Purvis et al., 2019; Wicks, 2017). One researcher posits, "Teaching a subject requires content knowledge that goes substantially beyond what is typically taught and learned in college and university classes" (Goldschmidt & Phelps, 2010, p. 443). Teachers reported that PD often felt irrelevant and disconnected from the classroom, often with conflicting goals between what is taught in the PL experience and their own opinions or experiences (Allen & Penuel, 2015).

Even with new reforms, scholars have opined that PL as an instructional practice does not meet teachers' needs but has digressed from its intended purpose (Supovitz & Christman, 2005). Kreider (2017) expressed that the PDs approach does not fully immerse teachers in valuable activities connected with classroom practices. The lack of connection between PD activities and classroom application is defined in literature as the traditional PD approach (DuFour & DuFour, 2013; Kreider, 2017; Smith, 2017). Traditionally PD are generally formal workshops or courses delivered by an outside expert to large groups of staff members and lack the focus required to have a substantial impact on student learning or change how teachers deliver their instruction (Brown, 2019; Smith, 2017). PL activities are often presented to teachers during a single session, but they are not revisited to further develop their needs. Traditional teacher PD is usually determined by school leadership, is content-focused, passive, and intermittent (Smith, 2017). Brown (2019) relates that traditional PD fed teachers knowledge about new trends and information dealing with educating children. He further contends that these types of

PDs reflected a legacy of teacher isolation, norms of privacy, fragmentation, and incoherence with far too little attention paid to the current realities of teachers' work and daily lives in schools. As a result of the lack of a connection, the PDs are often counterproductive, leave teachers confused, decrease their motivation when attempting to implement a new initiative, and encourage teachers to work in isolation instead of fostering a collaborative environment (Kreider, 2017). The assumption is that the PD offered will fill teachers' knowledge gap, and implementation of this knowledge will occur, which is not always an accurate assumption (Smith, 2017). James and McCormick (2009) described this postulation as a weak link, meaning the knowledge is valuable; however, the relationship between the PD and the teacher-learner is not strong.

Brown (2019) posits that the traditional approach continues to be lamented about in the professional literature. Teachers longing for a change and something fulfilling have led teachers to develop unofficial PL groups amongst themselves (Louis et al., 1996). The question of what makes PD effective has been widely studied (Lupton, 2019). Bambrick-Santoyo (2018) questioned how PD could be constructed for results to spark that kind of change for teachers and concluded that for PD to be successful, the intent and the quality of what is practiced must be considered. Bambrick-Santoyo (2018) states that only attending PD alone would not create positive student results. Several qualities surfaced in research on effective teacher PL (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018; Patton et al., 2015). The researchers contend that the best PD sessions are designed to respond to a specific school need, facilitate what to do in actual classroom practice, and contribute to lessening the learning gap. Bambrick-Santoyo (2018) purported that PD sessions often attempt to do

too much, which results in time being used unwisely and teachers being left with little to no real-time to practice the new skill from the PD. Therefore, principals and presenters are encouraged to narrow the “focus of your PD by asking simple questions such as what do you want them to practice?” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018). Additionally, Bambrick-Santoyo (2018) suggests a key to making PL stick, and for teachers to continue implementing their new skills in the classroom, presenters or administrators should follow up on teachers’ learning after the PD session.

Researchers have concluded that at least five features are tied to an effective PD: duration, collective participation, active learning, content, and coherence (Desimone & Pak, 2017): (1) duration or the number of contact hours that participants spend in the sessions can encourage or discourage teachers' active involvement. PD activities are to be ongoing throughout the school year and include 20 hours or more of contact time (Desimone & Pak, 2017); (2) Collective participation permits teachers from the same school, grade level, or department to create "a shared professional culture" to discuss content, instructional practices, methodology, problems, and solutions; (3) Active learning is the opportunities for teachers to become actively engaged. For example, obtaining feedback, being observed, obtaining feedback, developing lesson plans, and review student work; (4) Content focus are activities that are focused on subject matter content, deepening teachers' content knowledge and how students learn that content; (5) finally, coherence is about directly incorporating experiences consistent with the school curriculum and goals, teacher knowledge and beliefs, the needs of students, and school, district, and state reforms and policies.



Patton et al. (2015) note that effective PD results from supporting teachers' needs, connections to the classroom, collaboration, networking, and partnerships. He also contends that an ineffective PD session is usually a 'sit and get' or 'one-stop' workshop, but practical workshops are ongoing. Effective PD would be differentiated to a school, grade level, or teacher with additional support systems to ensure the teachers understand and have confidence in trying a new routine. Patton et al., (2015) proposed eight central features that support effective PD. 1. PD centers on teacher needs and interests. 2. PD acknowledges learning is a social process. 3. PD has collaborative opportunities within learning communities of educators. 4. PD is ongoing and sustained. 5. Teachers are treated as active learners. 6. PD improves teachers' pedagogical skills and content knowledge. 7. PD is facilitated with care. 8. PD focuses on improving students' learning outcomes.

According to Brown and Militello (2016), PD) continues to be the most common prescription for all that ails our educational system. Any issue or complaint lodged against schools has a remedy that involves PD. Thus, as the instructional leader, the principal is responsible for ensuring teachers' growth and development by leading effective PD. Kreider (2017) added that administrators' task of designing PD can be challenging because PD requires thoughtful planning to impact teachers' behaviors. The instructional leader must understand the potential of quality PD on building teachers' capacity and the direct impact on student learning. Research in western and Chinese societies revealed that teachers' PL does not just happen; PD must be nurtured (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). As a PL environment, the school must be a place that motivates,

supports, and sustains teachers' learning. These include planning meetings, coaching and feedback sessions, collaborative assessment of student work, teacher research groups, and curriculum development teams.

According to Schleicher (2018), to support more effective learning for students, more powerful learning opportunities have to be offered for teachers to become excellent. Supovitz et al., (2010) relate that improving teaching practices is the principal's responsibility in their schools. The principal must be acquainted with the need for PD; therefore, knowledge is vital to PD's implementation and overall functionality. Grogan and Andrews (2002) state that the principal is the lynchpin between teacher development and school improvement. The school administrator is crucial in teachers' PD as they are connected to the school's goals, mission, instructional program, and overall progress. Karacabey (2021) asserts that the school administrators are among those who regulate teachers and all staff's working environment and act as a bridge between all stakeholders and educational policies. Brown and Militello (2016) concluded that school leaders are the most important influence on teachers and their practices. The principal as an instructional leader is knowledgeable of their teachers' pedagogical and subject matter needs and the school context. Furthermore, according to Trehearn (2010) principals based on their position have the power to influence the context and delivery of PD. Their opinion, belief, and the value they attach to PD may play a role in shaping their staffs' attitudes (Brown & Militello, 2016; İlğan, 2013, in Karacabey, 2021).

Therefore, the instructional leader's attitudes and efforts towards PD can either increase or hinder teachers' motivation and opportunities (Karacabey, 2021). The vision

of 2023 in the Turkish education system emphasizes that school principals create and organize PD based on students' and teachers' needs. As a result, Karacabey (2021) researched to evaluate school principals' level of support in teachers' PD. The data collected from 4729 teachers revealed that school principals supported the teachers' PD occasionally, and only 25.5% of principals supported teachers' PD sufficiently. The findings also revealed that high school principals supported teachers' PD more than primary school principals. Buttram and Farley-Ripple (2016), in their article, asked what roles should principals play in teachers' PLCs, particularly given the expectation that principals should be the instructional leader in the school? Through a sequential mixed-methods study, the authors employed interviews, observations, and document analysis. They surveyed teachers in four elementary schools about the practices and support they received in grade-level PLC. The study was limited to a small sample of only four schools in two districts and relied primarily on principal and teacher self-reports. The data reveal that principals influence both what teachers undertake in PLC and how well they carry out these activities. Principals take steps to support PLC in their schools through various means, including creating a culture focused on high expectations for student learning, enhancing teacher knowledge and skills, and allocating and managing resources. Furthermore, Buttram and Farley-Ripple (2016) suggested that the principal is responsible for supporting teacher collaboration, specifically through data-driven instruction, planning of instruction, implementation of interventions, and curriculum pacing (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016).

The role of the instructional leader on PD and student achievement has been explored through recent studies. It has been determined as being complex (Robinson et al., 2008) because as a process it is filled with plateaus, discontinuities, regressions, and dead ends (Smith, 2017 p. 196). Robinson et al., (2008) contend that the leadership practice most strongly associated with positive student outcomes is promoting and participating in PL and PD. Instructional leaders involved in teachers' PD create resources and environments that will enable their staff to make and sustain the changes required for improved outcomes (Koonce, 2018). As the instructional leader, the principal must act as a change agent, ensuring that the PD offered is based on best practices, research, and data analysis. At a systemic level, the instructional leader should focus on setting goals and determine teachers' learning needs (Koonce, 2018).

Research has shown how a school's culture can allow positive changes to occur and distill positive changes from occurring (Peterson & Deal, 1998). The school culture can influence everything in a school: what staff discusses, what they feel, their willingness to change or adjust, acceptable practices of instruction, and the emphasis is on student and faculty learning (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Principals as instructional leaders can promote positive school culture among teachers and a positive climate for students conducive to learning through, accepting change, trust, and collaborative relationships. Brown (2019) claims that successful leaders who embrace a positive school culture holistically view their school environment, rethink and systematically practice procedures that will fit their organization's mold. These leaders understand the redefinition of their role as instructional leaders with a prior focus on teaching to leaders

of a professional community of learners. Maintaining the established culture means taking on a student-centered approach to teaching and learning and helping teachers understand the primary goal- student learning and professional growth. (Brown, 2019). When schools have strong trust, there will be a culture of risk taking, members will ask for and receive help from one another, and school-wide focus on problem-solving, PL, coaching, and mentoring (Halverson & Kelly, 2017). The foundation for school improvement is the instructional leader organizing PD around activities that create trust (Halverson & Kelly, 2017). Hallam et al., (2015), postulates that principals influence trust when they avoid micromanaging but give teams autonomy to direct their collaborative efforts. Brown (2019) proposes that instructional leaders can change the school's cultural atmosphere by welcoming fresh ideas and establishing a reciprocal relationship while valuing all opinions and individual strengths. Principals can also compliment teachers' teaching styles and promote strong teachers who are willing to work together in a trusting relationship (Ryan & Bohlin, 2000). In addition, cultivating a learning culture for teachers' principals also play another important role by becoming learners themselves. One of the most powerful ways for principals to extend their learning is to participate in PLC that are designed for school-wide learning with teachers to encourage higher efficacy, professional renewal, and support for student improvement (Hord, 2008).

**Maintenance of High Visibility.** Maintaining high visibility is another practice that instructional leaders should implement to create and sustain a positive learning environment. This function means improving the school climate through modeling

desired expectations and representing the mission and vision (Hallinger, 2005). It also means the instructional leader being in regular contact with teachers, students, parents, and the wider school community (Hallinger, 2005; Marzano, et al., 2005). According to Waters et al., (2003), maintaining high visibility as a function means frequent visits to the classrooms and being visible around the school. Vinitwatanakhun and Sawatsupaphon (2019), expressed that maintaining high visibility is referred to as walkthroughs to observe, interact, and provide constructive feedback to teachers about classroom instruction. Green (2017) notes that the principal being visible is about the principal becoming a role model for the norms, values, and vision needed to develop the school's culture. A principal visibility on the school campus indicates that they place interaction with students and faculty high on their list of priorities which can positively affect student achievement. Therefore, it can be concluded that the principal's visibility is connected to the effective management of the school, teacher pedagogy, and student achievement.

The instructional leader being visible within the school building is an essential leadership practice. Unfortunately, there is a lack of balance of time for a principal who desires to be a visible instructional leader and manage the building simultaneously. Oplatka (2017) states a disconnect between the desire to be an instructional leader and how time is spent exist. The school leader's role is not the same as in the past (Spicer, 2016). Today's principals are asked to demonstrate instructional leadership practices (Murphy et al., 2016) and spread their time over many responsibilities. The changes to the principal's culture have pushed principals to lead instructionally, work on unique culture and values within their school, build relationships with all school, and build

relationships with all school stakeholders (Spicer, 2016). Principals report they only spend a fraction of their day on tasks related to their most important role being an instructional leader (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). Given the many demands on their time, the principals as the instructional leaders have to prioritize and emphasize the most important tasks. Zhou (2017), in Liu & Hallinger, (2018) found that principals in Chinese work on average of 50 hours per week and a significant portion of their time is devoted to activities outside of the school. Grissom et al., (2013) found that, on average, principals spent less than 13% of their time on instruction-related activities; instead, their days were dominated by administrative and managerial activities. Grissom et al., (2013) found that principals spent 41% of their day in their office, 10% in classrooms, and 13% of the average day on instruction-related tasks.

Today, principals do not have enough time in their day to spend on instructional leadership practices that impact students' academic success (Parson et al., 2016). In their research, Huang et al., (2020) found that many activities dominated a principal's workday. In a study of 65 principals in Miami-Dade County, Horng et al., (2010) found that principals spent most of their day in their offices rather than classrooms. Research shows that the lack of a principal's time management can be considered one of the main factors that could lead to leadership inefficiency and the absence of progress or improvement (Goldring, et al., 2019; Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Deputy Superintendent Lana Brown of the Lindsay Unified School District in California said that without time in classrooms, "The kids wouldn't know us; the teachers wouldn't know us. The time in

classrooms us the opportunity to be visible and consciously engaged in what is going on throughout the district” (The Breakthrough Coach, 2021).

The literature has also indicated the influence of school level on principal instructional leadership and their visibility. Firestone and Herriott (1982) revealed that primary and secondary schools have been documented to differ in terms of structures, processes, and functions. Researchers have concluded that primary school principals were found to be more frequently involved in managing daily work and interacting with teachers, while secondary school principals attended more to allocating resources and extending external partnership (Herriott & Firestone, 1982). In his quantitative research, Heck (1992) also found that primary school principals devote more time to instructional leadership tasks such as classroom observation: and, discussion with teachers on instructional matters, than secondary principals (cited in Nguyen et al., 2017). In another quantitative study conducted in Singapore, researchers pointed out that instructional leadership is more frequently exercised in primary schools than secondary schools and the effects of principal instructional leadership on instruction and student achievement are more substantial at the primary level of schooling (Nguyen & Ng, 2014; Nguyen, et al., 2017).

Strong instructional leaders support classroom instruction without directly supporting individual teachers (Hornig & Loeb, 2010). Suppose principals are to fulfill their school's responsibility for meeting their students' educational and developmental needs. In that case, they must continually initiate action and respond to problems, which means being visible (Gunawan, 2017). The Breakthrough coach (2021) revealed that their



years of experience with helping school leaders have shown that principals' mere presence in the classrooms can change students' behavior. They further alleged that visible principals are like law enforcement officers who, when they appear on the scene, students become more compliant.

Despite not always having the time to interact and be visible with students and teachers, the benefits of principal visibility have been expressed throughout the literature on school improvement, instructional leadership, and effective schooling (Hicks, 2014). Furthermore, when principals have a visible presence inside and outside the classroom, they show interest and dedication to students and teachers. The Breakthrough Coach (2021) posits that in the visible, principals have the opportunities to identify struggling students and get them the resources they may urgently need, become aware of social and emotional issues, and address these issues before they become too challenging to resolve. Furthermore, being visible in the classroom, the principal as the instructional leader has the opportunity to cultivate a climate of trust among students and teachers, even while deepening their authority and strengthening their positions of leadership. The exchange of trust between principals and teachers is crucial because principals need teachers to provide instruction effectively, and teachers need principals to implement actions of support and give clear direction (Price & Moolenaar, 2015). By maintaining visibility around the school and in classrooms, the principal can act as an agent of change helping to transform the teaching and learning process and increase the quality and quantity of interactions both with students and teachers (Phillips, 2015). The principal being visible can gain opportunities to promote priorities and engage in personal relationships across

campus to have a lasting, positive effect on students' and teachers' attitudes and behaviors and the campus climate (Phillips, 2015). Principals reported that when they were able to maintain visibility, they were able to spend time with students daily, which provided them with the opportunity to know the students on a more personal level (Grady, 1990). When there is a relationship between instructional leaders and teachers, there will be an indirect impact on the school environment by the administrator and his or her personality, philosophy of education, dedication, and ability to connect and work cohesively with teachers.

Instructional leaders can become busy with non-instructional responsibilities and so become office-bound. Regardless of the reasons behind principals lacking visibility, teachers believe that administrators' absence impacts their credibility and their camaraderie with their staff (Grady, 1990). Scheibenhofer (2014) concurs, proclaiming that Principals are disconnected from the realities of being an instructor, and teachers may view this as the principal not being able to relate to the expectations placed upon the teachers. To create a visible presence in the school's day-to-day activities, the principal must organize and structure how they spend the remainder of their time on the job. Mazzoni (2017) proposed that a time management tip for principals is to be more visible in the school day. They must model behaviors that are aligned to the vision, organize resources to accomplish school goals, and make staff development activities a priority.

**Provision of Incentives for Teachers.** Providing an incentive for teachers is an important instructional leadership practice in creating a positive learning climate. The principals' role is to set up work structures that reward and recognize teachers for their

efforts (Geleta & Ababa, 2015) and inspire them (Hallinger et al., 2015). Kumar (2019) postulates that teachers will perform tasks based on their job description if their principals do not support them, but teachers will demonstrate a more positive attitude to their work when there is support. Therefore, principals must support and motivate their teachers to achieve the goals of the school.

What motivates a teacher to work hard? What are the kinds of incentives offered to teachers for their hard work? Hallinger and Murphy (1985) stated that the principal's creation of a positive learning climate requires a system of rewards and recognition for teachers' efforts to ensure student learning and achievement. Schleicher (2018) acknowledged that management rewards workers whose outputs exceed expectations in the industrial work environment. In these environments, workers usually compete against each other, resulting in resentment and ill-treatment. However, in a professional environment like the school, all educators' success depends on the collaboration and output of each worker. It is natural for the assumption to be made within or outside the educational system that providing incentives for teachers is about the principal as the instructional leader, finding ways to pay more money to teachers as an incentive to increase their students' achievement. Blasé & Blasé (2000) in Phillips (2015) states that teacher incentives may be expressed in specific ways such as offering simple feedback or suggestions, requesting teachers' opinions, supporting collaboration and PD opportunities, and praising effective teachers. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) state that incentives come in the form of honor and awards, public recognition, or privately expressed praise. Eric Jensen in his book, *Teaching with Poverty in Mind* suggested that

teachers are incentivized through short sincere compliments, follow-through after seeking input, being consistent and an empathetic ear, paying attention to teachers' concerns, and taking steps to find solutions to teacher issues, and providing time for teachers to collaborate and de-stress.

Providing incentives for teachers is one factor that is needed to develop the teaching and learning process and to ensure that the school environment is conducive to learning. Therefore, school principals must be cognizant of the influence of intrinsic motivations, as defined by Self-Determination Theory and the accumulating effect of extrinsic forces (Sivertson, 2018). Kumar (2019) and Sivertson (2018) attested that either intrinsic or extrinsic or even both can lead to high motivation levels and contribute to job satisfaction and high levels of performance. Alfonso (2018) referred to extrinsic motivation as tasks that may have no inherent value to the teacher but are completed to achieve an external value; while extrinsic motivation are activities that are undertaken because they are inherently enjoyable or interesting. When teachers are intrinsically motivated, performance is strengthened, creativity and tenacity increases, and teachers are more emotionally stable (Alfonso, 2018). Teachers who are extrinsically motivated reported that they feel safe in the workplace, there is a relationship of respect and cooperation with other teachers and school leaders, and students are more willing to learn (Alfonso, 2018). Thompson et al., (2014) enunciate that intrinsic motivations provide the strongest of energies that can be utilized to maximize educational quality and outcomes and are crucial to success in the classroom.

The most discussed form of extrinsic reward in literature is a financial incentive. A monetary reward can influence an individual's drive to act towards desired direction (Bello & Jakada, 2017). Fryer (2011) in Kumar (2019) added that financial incentive is for two purposes: (1) it motivates teachers to become more productive and (2) it is an investment in productive teachers, retain genuine ones, and get rid of mediocre ones. One of the issues that instructional leaders have had challenges with is teacher absenteeism. The high rates of absenteeism within Ghana, India, United States, and some areas in Morocco have led to incentive programs being implemented to improve attendance (Lewis, 2020). In her doctoral research Taylor-Price (2012) found that absenteeism declined in the first year once an incentive program was implemented in her study. Knoster (2016) mentioned the Aldine Independent School District in Harris County, Texas, that saved approximately \$284,000 and doubled its number of teachers with perfect attendance in a single year because of their incentive plan. Although many scholars have cited the effectiveness of teacher attendance incentive programs, other research cites some incentive programs' ineffectiveness. In Jacobson's (1989) study of incentive plans in upstate New York, the researcher noted that incentive programs were often effective for a short time but were dependent upon teacher behavior (cited in LaRocca, 2017). Ahn and Vigdor (2010) noted it is naïve to assume that teachers are not motivated by money. However, it is just as naïve to assume that teachers are only motivated by money. However, the monetary reward available to principals to incentivize teachers is very small or limited (Alfonso, 2018; Hallinger et al., 2015). Therefore, scholars have indicated that other than financial incentives, there are other forms of

incentives that can be used to motivate teachers and increase their performance. Kumar (2019) suggests that there are less costly and meaningful incentives that can be provided publicly or privately. For example, teacher praise, teacher of the week recognition, certificate rewards during assemblies and staff functions, thank you card, a positive remark in their lesson plan, publishing teachers' efforts in school magazines and news bulletin, providing leadership opportunities, and hosting staff social functions.

Nixon (2018) conducted a mixed research collected data from four middle schools located in a rural NC School District. During the focus group interview, teachers continuously referenced the importance of administration acknowledging teachers for their efforts. One participant stated that it is hard to maintain a good relationship with people when their lack of caring or management affects teachers' ability to do their job. Another participant remarked that an entire building's focus changes when employees feel like they are not even noticed. Two solutions that were suggested from participants are that administration need to acknowledge their accomplishments in anyway, big or small, be present in the halls and classrooms and sponsor activities that will celebrate them and boost their morale.

Instructional leaders are responsible for monitoring climate and cultures at their schools and adjusting the perpetually changing education landscapes. Therefore, it becomes necessary that instructional leaders continuously transform their schools and keep abreast of the continuous development of new standards, student achievement outcomes, and school performance goals and keep teachers satisfied. Satisfied teachers are motivated. Murtedjo and Suharningsih (2016) acknowledged the necessity of a highly

motivated teacher to attain the highest performance standards. Liu and Onwuegbuzie, (2014) attest that highly motivated teachers are committed to their craft, students, and schools and possess high job satisfaction levels. Motivated teachers can effectively balance the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and transfer their positive levels of motivation and job satisfaction into the classroom, making for an engaging and invigorating academic experience (Sivertson, 2018).

**Provision of Incentives for Students and Learning.** The instructional leader's final function under the dimension of developing a positive school learning climate is providing incentives for learning. This dimension describes the principal's responsibilities leading positive learning and promoting school effectiveness through a reward system (Sanchez, 2019). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) identify this dimension as principals developing a climate in which students perceive academic achievement as significant and principals working with the staff to reward students for their accomplishments. Instructional leaders who seek to raise student achievement create an environment that cares and supports students' learning and provides incentives to create academic press (Louis et al., 2016). Just as teachers can be motivated with incentives, a great instructional leader also provides incentives for students to be motivated (List et al., 2018).

The principal is a key factor in bridging classrooms and school reward systems and ensuring that they are student-centered and able to impact learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The principal's role is to create a positive learning climate in which students value academic achievement by frequently rewarding and recognizing them

within their classroom and before the whole school (Geleta & Ababa, 2015). When providing incentives for students, both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards should be considered. List et al., (2018) assert that performance will increase when an incentive is appropriately designed, whether pecuniary or non-financial inducements are used. Students' incentives need not be fancy or expensive, nor do they need to have a market value or be predictable (Hallinger et al., 2015). The most important thing is that students should have opportunities to be recognized for their achievement, within the classroom, and before the school population. Some examples of rewards offered to students are praise, recognition of achievement in assemblies, congratulation notes, honor roll listings, a pat on the back, and annual prize giving. Principals can also reward students by extending lunchtime, sponsoring field trips, letting students eat lunch outside, or hosting awards assemblies (Phillips, 2015). Principals who take that extra time to praise students for their achievements create a positive school climate. As Phillips (2015) states, these small gestures are reflections of the principal's intentional behaviors.

A recent study that has examined incentives in education is the research by Jalava, et al., (2015). Jalava et al., (2015) examined the effects of non-financial incentives on the test performance of more than a thousand sixth-graders in Swedish primary schools. Their research found significant differences in test scores between the intrinsically motivated control group and three extrinsically motivated treatment groups. They also found that the motivational strengths of the non-financial incentives differ across the test score distribution, across the skill distribution, with peer familiarity, and for gender. Male



students are only motivated by rank-based incentives, while female students are also motivated by receiving a symbolic reward.

Riener and Wagner (2019) researched the impact of non-monetary incentives on the performance of more than 2,000 secondary pupils in Germany on a mathematics test. Their research participants consisted of two treatment groups who received predetermined incentives. In contrast, the third treatment was allowed to choose one from four incentives – a medal, homework voucher, parent letter, or surprise. The researchers found that predetermined and self-chosen non-monetary incentives might have opposing effects on pupils' performance. The predetermined incentives seemed to negatively impact performance, while the self-chosen incentives significantly increased pupils' (self-reported) learning effort. The researchers concluded that the effectiveness of non-monetary incentives might depend on the school system and the cultural background, which could result from cultural differences. For example, in German schools, awards and praise for performance by the teacher is uncommon, whereas, in the US, awards are more common in schools

The existing literature on the effectiveness of incentives to motivate a student to learn have produced mixed results. Some researchers contend that monetary incentives are linked to school performance and are an effective way to incentivize learning (Bettinger, 2012; Levitt et al., 2019). Other scholars reach opposite conclusions (Visaria et al., 2016). In his paper, Bettinger (2012) presents evidence from an incentive program for students in grades 3 through 6 in Coshocton, Ohio. The study identified the effects of the program on students' academic behavior. In this program, students could receive cash

payments of as much as \$100 for successful completion of their standardized testing. The evidence showed that higher grades' incentives increased math scores but not those of other subjects such as reading or social science. One possible interpretation of these results is that external incentives may be more effective in concrete subjects such as primary school math than in more abstract subjects. In their research, Levitt et al., (2019) explored behavioral economics' power to influence the level of effort exerted by students in a low-stakes testing environment. Their findings revealed a significant impact on test scores from incentives when the rewards are delivered immediately, and nonfinancial incentives were more effective with younger students than with older students.

The absence of students has become a recognized epidemic for teaching and learning. When students miss class, it not only results in a loss of learning opportunities for students, but it can become burdensome for teachers, and it can robustly predict academic performance and educational failure (Balu & Ehrlich, 2018). Among the various intervention options for attendance improvements that instructional leaders are encouraged to implement is the use of incentives (Balu & Ehrlich, 2018). Scholars have presented mixed results on the effectiveness of incentives to improve attendance. In their analysis, Robinson et al., (2019) showed that giving surprise incentives to honor and reinforce perfect attendance unexpectedly demotivated the target behavior: award recipients had significantly worse attendance than otherwise identical students in the control group. This negative effect was particularly pronounced among students with poor school performance. They also concluded that younger students might have been motivated by the prospect of earning an award and improved their attendance, but the

positive effect disappeared as students grew older. This supported previous findings by Levitt et al., (2019), who found that the prospect of winning a symbolic award did motivate better attendance among younger students, but it was insufficient to motivate the older students.

Visaria et al., (2016), in an experiment in non-formal schools in Indian slums, a reward scheme for attending a target number of school days increased average attendance when the scheme was in place but had heterogeneous effects after it was removed. The incentive did not affect attendance after it was discontinued among students with high baseline attendance, and test scores were unaffected. Among students with low baseline attendance, the incentive lowered post-incentive attendance, and test scores decreased. The incentive was also associated with lower interest in school material and lower optimism and confidence about these students' ability. The results suggest incentives might have unintended long-term consequences for the very students they are designed to help the most.

Schools as an institution are like families. Although academics are the focus of all schools, all students need adults, including teachers and principals, to care about their interests. Students spend approximately an average of six hours in school each day; therefore, academics and the relationship between students and their teachers have an unlimited influence on their students. Consequently, a teacher's motivation will, in turn, meaningfully impact students' motivation and achievements. Sivertson (2018) claims that a teacher's motivation directly links to motivating, de-motivating, or sustaining student

motivation; so, student success depends on the motivation of a teacher. It is, therefore, the principal's responsibility to ensure that they have a motivated staff.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In Chapter 2, I located and analyzed current and seminal literature on key instructional leadership practices and to provide the context for my research. The literature review commenced with a brief introduction and the research strategies I used to locate information relevant to instructional leadership and the instructional leadership practices of principals. I discussed the conceptual framework in detail. The literature review that followed included discussion of seminal and current literature related to the following topics: definitions of instructional leadership; the evolution of instructional leadership; and instructional leadership practices related to defining a school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school-learning climate).

The literature revealed that instructional leadership practices have been a phenomenon since the effective movement and because of its direct and indirect impact of instructional leadership it has dominated the field of education. As a result, school leaders school principals cannot afford to lack knowledge of or ignore developing and engaging in instructional leadership practices. It has also been revealed that research on instructional leadership practices continues to be concentrated more on the experiences and perspectives of the western world and although some research has been conducted in the developing world, more contextual information for better understanding, interpretation, and application of the instruction leadership practices is needed to respond and impact pedagogy in schools.

Chapter 3 will describe the rationale for a basic qualitative design and the researcher's role. The chapter will also discuss (a) research design and rationale, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) the specific methodology, which includes data collection, instrumentation, the process for the selection of the participants, and how I will protect their rights and confidentiality, issues of trustworthiness as well as the study ethics procedures.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The problem addressed was that a lack of understanding of how public school administrators in this British territory use instructional leadership practices to increase student achievement. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the role that instructional leadership plays in increasing student achievement in a public school in a British territory. Chapter 3 is organized into five major sections that address the methodology for the study. In the first section, I describe the rationale for a basic qualitative design and the role of the researcher. In the next section, I discuss my role in the study, the interview protocol that I used, and the recruitment procedures that I followed. A description of the procedures for instrumentation, site and participant selection, data collection, and analysis is also given. The chapter also includes discussion of issues of trustworthiness covering the components of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research question for this research was, How are school administrators using instructional leadership practices to increase student achievement? I used a basic qualitative research design to gather data on the role that instructional leadership plays in increasing student achievement in a public school in a British territory. Qualitative researchers engage with participants in their natural setting and study how they interpret and make sense of their experiences; the goal is to understand individuals' social reality (Mohajan, 2018). Qualitative research is typically conducted in real-

world environments, which particularly useful as a practical inquiry mode, mainly when the relationship between the phenomenon and the context is unclear (Yin, 2014). Qualitative researchers do not measure variables (Dodgson, 2017); they rely on qualitative data derived from opinions, feelings, experiences, and in-depth personal details (Clark & Vealé, 2018; Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Finally, qualitative research is exploratory and seeks to explain how and why a particular social phenomenon operates as it does in a particular context (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Mohajan, 2018).

Qualitative research includes many theoretical traditions that offer different lenses to view a central phenomenon (Patton, 2015). These designs include phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, basic research, and case study. In this study, I used the basic qualitative research design, also known as basic interpretive qualitative study or generic qualitative study (Merriam, 2009; Percy et al., 2015). In a basic qualitative study, a researcher aims to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences (Miriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 23). The basic qualitative research approach involves interpreting views and making meaning of experiences, which allows the researcher to explore a phenomenon from a real-world perspective (Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

According to Percy et al. (2015), researchers investigating people's opinions, beliefs, or reflections regarding an experience in their environment should use a basic qualitative approach. Furthermore, basic qualitative researchers anticipate acquiring a greater understanding of a situation (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). An interpretive

qualitative design was the best fit for this study to explore instructional leadership's role in increasing student achievement in public schools in a British territory. I focused on a particular phenomenon which is instructional leadership practices, and produced research that was descriptive and written in a narrative form. Finally, the study was heuristic as it brought about new meaning, confirmed what was already known, or extended the reader's knowledge and experience.

I assumed an interpretative paradigm because of the interest in the meaning and the whole experience rather than parts. The interpretative paradigm also assumes that reality is subjective (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Interpretivism is also more sensitive toward participants. The interpretative approach provides the researcher with an in-depth understanding of particular contexts. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), the interpretive paradigm generates high-level validity in data as it is based on personal experience. Finally, interpretivism enabled me to secure fidelity to examine the investigated phenomena and produce data that reflect the participants' varied experiences as school principals.

I conducted semistructured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews to better understand the participants' instructional leadership practices from various perspectives. Throughout the interview, the 16 teachers and principals in the study shared their perceptions, understandings, and experiences around a phenomenon, instructional leadership practices (Hatch, 2002). Data analysis revealed that the instructional leadership practices that participating principals engage in or do not engage in and the challenges they face. During the semi-structured interview, I asked participants guided questions based on the



instructional leadership conceptual framework proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). I also asked probing questions to elicit further rationale and explanatory information about the instructional leadership practices and the challenges of the role during the era of education reform and accountability.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher plays an integral and sensitive role in the research process. As the sole researcher, I was the primary instrument of inquiry, data collection, and analysis (Dodgson, 2019; Mohajan, 2018). Readers need to understand the researcher's position concerning the contextual environment of the research. For this basic qualitative study, my fundamental role was that of an interviewer, and I conducted interviews, transcribed, coded, analyzed, discussed data, and drew conclusions.

I am a school teacher and a department instructional leader. In qualitative research, the researcher must identify any relationship with the participants that may threaten the integrity of the data collected during the interview. My relationship with the participants is limited because we do not work in the same school context. During my interaction with participants, I ensured that I did not assert superiority over them as a doctoral student, and I maintained professionalism and integrity. Transparency was a key component of the research process; hence, I declared to my participants, orally and in writing, that my research is only for academic purposes and has nothing to do with the evaluative process of the department of education. I also abided by all regulations and principles outlined by the department in the British Territory and by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

During the data collection process, my role was that of an interviewer, which according to Qu and Dumay (2011), is not a trivial enterprise. My role as a research interviewer can be understood using the metaphor of a traveler who, upon his return home, gives the sum of his traveling experience, leading to a different conceptualization of knowledge. The story may also be told back to the people among whom the interviewer traveled, and modified so that the traveler is ultimately transformed by the experience (Kvale, 1996). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed but required various skills, such as intensive listening, note-taking, careful planning, and sufficient preparation (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Within an objectivist epistemology, participants reviewed the interview questions and transcripts and gave feedback. Birt et al., (2016) state that returning verbatim transcripts creates an unusual situation where participants can see their spoken language in written form. The transcript review and member checking validated, verified, or assessed qualitative results' trustworthiness (Birt, et al., 2016). The data was analyzed for common themes, and after a thorough analysis, the data was discussed.

One of the key concepts of qualitative research is the researcher's bias and the need to define and establish reflexivity. Reflexivity focuses on self-knowledge, sensitivity, and the careful self-monitoring of biases, beliefs, and personal experiences (Berger, 2015). Although I am a colleague of the participants, I did not allow my position's biases to cloud the data interpretation. However, I took responsibility for my situatedness within the research and the effect on the setting and participants (Berger, 2015). No incentives were provided to participate in the study.

## **Methodology**

This section of chapter 3 discussed the qualitative methodology, the sample used, the participant selection, and the data collection and analysis procedures. The methodological approach for this study was a basic qualitative study, and the goal was to describe the phenomenon in its context (Yin, 2014).

### **Participant Selection Logic**

For this research, data was collected from a total of 16 educators. The researchers invited both principals and teachers from the only school district in the British Territory to participate. Purposeful sampling was used based on the assumption that the individuals selected are knowledgeable about or experienced with instructional leadership. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) state that purposeful sampling is used to discover, gain insights and understand the phenomenon from which the most could be learned.

From the territory's 24 principals and 900 teachers, 16 participants were invited to participate in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The sample was chosen based on the participants' qualities and willingness to provide the information based on their knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016). Malterud et al., (2016) reason that sample size can be determined by the 'information power' a given sample holds. This information power is influenced by the study's purpose, the sample's specificity, the theoretical background, the quality of dialogue, and the analysis strategy. There is no definitive number of participants, as there is no exact number required for qualitative research; therefore, data saturation can be attained by as little as six interviews, depending on the

population's sample size (Guest et al., 2006). The researcher must focus on acquiring rich and thick data rather than the sample size (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012).

### ***Procedure for Gaining Access to Participants***

The setting for this research was the primary to senior schools of the British Territory. The participants were both principals and teachers. Access to the participants was achieved by following certain steps. First, I obtained written permission from the commissioner of education to conduct this research. All aspects and components of the research was shared including plausible benefits of the research within the field of education (see Appendix). Once approval was granted, I completed the necessary process to secure Walden's IRB approval. Upon approval to conduct the research, I acquired a list of primary to senior school principals' email addresses using the department of education website. A further list of principals was created based on the criteria of being a certified principal for more than 3 years and possess a depth of knowledge about instructional leadership practices during the era of accountability. A list of teachers whom they supervise was also be created. Initial contact was made through an email inviting potential participants' participation and detailing the research's nature and purpose. Participants were informed of the ethical considerations of this research, their right to anonymity and confidentiality. A copy of the informed consent form was also attached. The responses and consent form from the invited principals and teachers was reviewed and interviews were scheduled.

The initial plan was to conduct face-to-face interviews with administrators and teachers, but as a result of the global pandemic COVID-19, this plan was adjusted to conduct interviews via Zoom.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Data collection is a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering information to answer emerging research questions (Cypress, 2018). It involves more than the procedures for collecting data; it is about the ethical issues involved in gaining entry and approval from the research site. It is also about protecting the participants' rights, including informed consent, planning the mode of recording information, storing the data securely, and properly using and disseminating findings (Cypress, 2018).

Participation in this research was voluntary. It was essential to establish a respectful relationship with all participants. Merriam (2009) admonishes researchers to establish a close relationship with participants facilitated in an open and honest environment. Therefore, a good rapport with each participant was developed to forge this relationship. Participants were informed of my role as the researcher, listener, and the primary instrument for gathering data during the interviews. They were assured that the information they shared will be valuable to the research and all responses would be treated confidentially. The interviews took place at a time convenient to all participants in a neutral setting, and each participant was addressed professionally.

#### ***Recruitment***

The recruitment of participants for the research is one of the most challenging and resource-intensive aspects of the research (Archibald & Munce, 2015). Initial contact

with administrators and teachers was made through the school district email to request their participation in this basic qualitative study. My contact details, including my email address and cell phone number, were included in the email. After potential participants contacted me, I sent an additional email with information regarding the study, such as the study's consent form and purpose. When participants replied to the second email, I requested their availability for an interview. I established the time and date for the Zoom interviews. Before the interviews, I tested my data collection instruments and organized the interview protocols by a number which will be used to identify study participants.

### ***Data Collection***

This study's data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews to understand instructional leadership practices. The data was collected from 16 participants- five administrators and 11 teachers. The interviews provided a valuable way for the researchers to learn about the participants' world as they shared their perceptions, understandings, and experiences around a phenomenon- instructional leadership practices (Hatch, 2002; Qu & Dumay, 2011). Due to COVID-19, interviews for this study were conducted via Zoom. Each interview was scheduled to accommodate the times available to each participant, and 30-45 minutes were reserved for each interview. The interviews were conducted from my home or school office and were recorded with the participants' permission for transcription accuracy. Participants were informed of their rights to withdraw from the study at anytime. In addition to recording each interview, field notes to document additional evidence from the interview and improve my findings' depth were taken. After each interview, the researcher enquired if

participants were willing to participate in a follow-up interview for member checking.

The researcher also thanked participants for their time.

Each interview was transcribed within 24-48 hours after the interview and transcribed into a Microsoft document to avoid data piling (Creswell & Clark, 2017) and losing data. Moser and Korstjens (2018) suggest that researchers cannot wait for the analysis because an iterative approach and emerging design are at the heart of qualitative research. The transcribed interviews' verbatim transcription can be time-consuming, but transcribing the interviews allowed me to get intimate and familiar with the data. It also allowed me to make analytic memos during the process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The interview transcript was set up based on a format proposed by Merriam and Tisdell (2015) to enable analysis. At the top of the first page, pertinent information such as when, where, and with whom the interview was conducted was noted. A column was also created on the left-hand side of the page to add codes and enable analysis. Each page was sequentially numbered, and each interview question was in bold, enabling easy reading. After the preparation of each transcript, hard copies were created and locked away in the home office, while the soft copies were stored on a password-protected computer.

### ***Protection of Participants' Rights***

All research comes with a risk of harm. As such, I followed all IRB guidelines. The protection of participants began with obtaining approval from IRB. I completed the National Institutes of Health's training on protecting human research participants, I waited on approval from IRB Walden University and the study site. I protected participants from harm, taking into consideration confidentiality and informed consent.

The identity of the participants was not revealed at any time during the study. Each participant was assigned a letter to protect their identities before, during, and after data collection. I used the letter P followed by a number to refer to participants who are school principals, and T followed by a number for each teacher participant. For example, P1 referred to the first principal, P2 referred to the second, and T1 referred to the first teacher interviewed. The data collected was stored on a password-protected personal computer, and any non-electronic data was securely stored in a desk located in my home office. Data will be kept secured for 5 years, per the protocol of Walden University. After 5 years, I will destroy all the data I had collected.

### **Instrumentation**

Instrumentation is concerned with data collection instruments and measuring the intended phenomenon (Burkholder, et al., 2016). It is also concerned with the interpretive analysis that leads to a deep understanding of the phenomenon (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Interviews are used to understand individuals lived experiences and their subjective perspectives of a phenomenon (McGrath et al., 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Interviews provide a valuable way for researchers to learn about the world of others. Research that uses qualitative interviews can give a voice to minorities and groups in society that may not be heard elsewhere (McGrath et al., 2019). The interview protocol was the primary data collection tool for the current study. A qualitative interview is often the most effective and convenient means of gathering information (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).



Qualitative research interviewing is generally less structured; therefore, semi-structured interviews were used in the first stage of data collection. The unstructured interview process shaped the individual situation and context, intending to make the interviewees feel relaxed and unassessed (Hannabuss, 1996). The semi-structured interview involved prepared questions guided by identified themes consistently and systematically interposed with probes designed to elicit more detailed responses (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The research question and Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional leadership model was used to create questions for the interview protocol. The interview protocol was refined through the interview protocol refinement Framework developed by Castillo-Montoya (2016). The framework is a viable four-phase approach to developing a solid initial interview protocol. Use of it increases congruency and strengthens the reliability of data. I elicited rich, focused, meaningful data that captured participants' experiences to the extent possible. The four phases are (a) ensuring that interview questions align with research questions, (b) constructing an inquiry-based conversation, (c) receiving feedback on interview protocols, and (d) piloting the interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

The phases were based on the study's purpose, research questions, and the existing literature on conducting qualitative research. In phase 1, I created an interview protocol matrix that mapped the interview questions against the research question. The matrix table helped to ensure that the interview questions were relevant and necessary for the study and resulted in insightful data about instructional leadership practices in the British Territory. The next step was refining the proposed questions from formal

academic language to daily conversation discourse. Therefore, the questions were free from technical language and written in the language the study participants understood. The conceptual framework of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) was reviewed, ensuring that the created questions were aligned with the purpose of the study, which is to explore the role that instructional leadership plays in increasing student achievement in a public school in a British Territory.

Various inquiry-based questions that provoked rich, in-depth responses and follow-up questions were prepared for different conversation styles (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). To enhance the feasibility and reliability of the data collected, I solicited the feedback of two research colleagues familiar with conducting interviews and instructional leadership. They examined the structure and length of the interview protocol, language, and ease of understanding. Special attention was given to the ethical and cultural sensitivities of the interview questions. The reviewers were asked to put themselves in place of the respondents and anticipate how the actual respondent may understand and answer the questions. Their feedback helped improve the interview's lexicon so that appropriate words were used and any possible element that might imply any stakeholder's incompetency be removed. Finally, the researcher piloted the interview protocol on colleagues similar to the study participants to ensure that the instrument performed the desired job as required by the purpose of the research (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The instrument's pilot testing was done with one deputy principal and one teacher to ensure that the interview worked as intended in actual practice. For this study's purpose, the pilot

test was assessed for the cultural and political sensitivities that may be encountered during the interview process.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Qualitative data analysis is one of the most critical steps in qualitative research. Data analysis is a dynamic process weaving together the recognition of emerging themes, identification of key ideas or units of meaning, and material acquired from the literature (Mohajan, 2018). It is a process focused on aligning the research question to the conceptual framework (Yin, 2014). The primary purpose of qualitative data analysis is to make meaning of the data collected so that the data collected will not be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Ngulube, 2015).

The “true test of a competent qualitative researcher comes in the analysis of the data” (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004 in Ngulube, 2015). Qualitative data analysis is concerned with transforming raw data by evaluating, coding, exploring, and describing patterns, themes, and categories to interpret them and provide their underlying meanings (Ngulube, 2015). One of the systems for managing the data for this research is coding. The transcript was the main instrument for analyzing and coding the data. Kranke et al., (2016) posit that coding is essential to developing a sound qualitative analysis because the data interpretation depends on close and careful readings of the texts. It is the transitional process between data collection and analysis (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Coding is about breaking down and understanding a text. It involves the grouping and labeling of data segments (Ngulube, 2015). A code in qualitative research is attached to words, phrases, or sentences representing aspects of data or capturing data’s essence or features

(Clark & Vealé, 2018; Ngulube, 2015). The data gathered from the interviews were categorized based on the conceptual framework.

The data analysis process commenced with transcribing the recorded interviews. One initial step taken was immersing myself in the data. I read and digested the information to make sense of it and understand through reflexivity and open-mindedness the participants' narratives (Azungah, 2018). The transcripts were reread thoroughly to clarify and ensure that all important aspects of the data were captured. After reviewing the transcribed data, I coded the data and began to identify common themes based on the conceptual framework. According to Saldaña (2021), coding should capture the central ideas or issues presented in the data. There are many different coding options that researchers can use; however, the elements of a good code include (a) labels, (b) definitions of what each theme concerns, (c) descriptions of how to know when the theme occurs, (d) descriptions of any qualification or exclusions to identifying themes; and (e) examples to eliminate possible confusion when looking for themes (Boyatzis, 1998 cited in Ngulube, 2015).

For this research, inductive coding was adopted. Each transcript was read thoroughly, and a color-coded system was assigned to paragraphs, phrases, and key points relevant to the conceptual framework. Deriving themes from the raw data using the inductive approach pre-empts the possibility of a researcher forcing a predetermined result (Azungah, 2018). Each participant's phrases and key points were entered onto a spreadsheet and then collapsed and merged into broader conceptual codes. The spreadsheet facilitated description and interpretation and allowed the researcher to

compare similarities and differences of the data across and within codes and between participants (Neale, 2016). The Findings can then be related to the literature review, the conceptual framework, and instructional practices

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is used interchangeably with the terms validity, quality, or rigor (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Trustworthiness or the study's rigor refers to the confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to assume the quality of the study (Connelly, 2016). When considering trustworthiness, qualitative researchers seek to answer, "Can the findings be trusted?" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). There are several trustworthiness criteria, but many qualitative researchers accept the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Gubba (1985). These criteria include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

#### **Credibility**

Credibility is the most important criterion of trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016). The research's credibility ensures that the data collected is aligned with the research question that guided the study. Credibility was improved by ensuring that the study participants were appropriate regarding the research question and that data saturation was reached during data collection. Quotes were extracted from the transcripts to highlight the participant's voice and contributed to the research's credibility. The researcher also mitigated the risk of hurting the study's credibility by pre-testing the interview protocol to understand what types of responses the questions would yield and whether the responses were relevant to the research aim (Kyngäs et al., 2019). Other techniques I used to

establish credibility include prolonged engagement with participants, transcript validation, and member-checking. Kyngäs et al., (2019) postulated that strategies are used to improve the credibility of a study, but if misused, they can also threaten the credibility of the research. Prolonged engagement required me to spend sufficient time with the study participants and in the research setting, developing relationships and co-constructing meanings before the data collection phase began. The time spent with participants allowed the researcher to identify some of the realities experienced by the participants and made the participants comfortable interacting with the researcher (Kyngäs et al., 2019). Transcript validation involves the researcher returning the transcripts to the interviewees. This strategy not only upheld research ethics but validated what was said during the interviews. It ensures that the written words in the transcript were those said by the interviewees. Member checking, also known as respondent validation, involves giving data and interpretations to the participants to confirm credibility. Proponents of member checks maintain that such checks enhance the research findings' credibility or validity (Thomas, 2017).

### **Transferability**

Transferability describes the degree to which research findings can be applied to other fields and contexts while maintaining context-specific richness (Kyngäs et al., 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Transferability is affected by every stage of research, including the choice of research context and topic. Consequently, the researcher provided a rich descriptive account of the setting, sample and sampling techniques, interview protocol, and data analysis so that other researchers can assess whether the results drawn

from this sample are applicable to other contexts. I transcribed the interviews and conducted prolonged engagement with participants, transcript validation, and member-checking to ensure the data's accuracy. According to Kyngäs et al., (2019), the transparent reporting of the research process and results are critical to achieving sufficient transferability. It is hoped that the findings of this research be transferred to other similar public schools.

### **Dependability**

Dependability refers to the strength of the data collected. Dependability concerns consistency across the research starting point, data collection, analysis, and reporting (Burkholder et al., 2016). A study shows high dependability if another researcher can readily follow the decision trail used by the initial researcher (Kyngäs et al., 2019). There are several ways through which I, as the researcher, strengthen the dependability of the data analysis. The methodological steps of recording interviews and transcribing verbatim what was said was clearly outlined. Also, using a secure central database for storing, managing, and coding the data provided a way to ensure the data's integrity. I reported any shift in methodology or data collection during the research process. The findings were presented in a straightforward, concise matter so future researchers can effectively replicate the study and produce the same findings.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability concerns the connection between the data and the results (Kyngäs et al., 2019). It concerns the aspect of neutrality and the need to secure the inter-subjectivity of the data. Hence, when considering confirmability, I evaluated whether the

respondents' data solely shaped the findings or if the results reflected some of the researcher's bias, motivation, or other interests. While qualitative researchers acknowledge the research's subjective nature, research methods must be based on procedures, analyses, and conclusions that can be verified (Burkholder et al., 2016). The confirmability issues were reduced by reviewing the interview questions with two research colleagues in the field and adjusting the instrument to better target the research aim. To guarantee that researcher bias was not included in this study, I transcribed the words of the interview verbatim as they were shared with me during the interview process. The transcripts of precisely what was stated in the interviews helped me to achieve confirmability. Member checking the data contents at various stages was another critical strategy in establishing confirmability and integrity in the research process. The data interpretation was grounded in the data and not based on my own particular preferences and viewpoints (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Also, I remained utterly open-minded, neutral, flexible, and continuously reflected on the phenomenon of interest to ensure fidelity to the data produced by the participants.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 began with the restatement of the purpose, which is to explore the role that instructional leadership plays in increasing student achievement in a public school in a British Territory. The research question and an explanation of my role as the researcher were provided. The methodology discussed the purpose of choosing a basic qualitative design, and the participant selection, recruitment procedures, and instrumentation were explored. An explanation of the data collection included the proper use of the interview



protocol to obtain the data for the research study. The data analysis section explored how the data was analyzed once the data was collected. The latter part of Chapter 3 described how trustworthiness would be maintained throughout the study specifically discussing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

In this basic qualitative research study, I explored instructional leadership's role in increasing student achievement in public schools in a British territory. The instructional leadership model of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) was the conceptual framework used to guide the research. To explore the perceptions of administrators and teachers, I used the three dimensions of the conceptual framework: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate. The interview protocol used to collect data was developed based on the conceptual framework and addressed the following question: How are school administrators using instructional leadership practices to increase student achievement? This chapter begins with a description of the setting of the research site. Next, I outline the process for data collection and explain the data analysis processes, present results, and provide evidence of trustworthiness. The chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Setting**

The setting for the study was the only public school district located in this British territory. The participants in this basic qualitative research were employed by either a primary, middle, or senior public school. The school district serves 50 schools: 18 are primary, five are middle, and two are senior. The population calculates to approximately 4,500 students. I purposely selected public primary to senior school teachers and principals as study participants. The two criteria for selection for this study required participants to be (a) experienced and knowledgeable about the phenomenon being

studied, (b) a certified principal for more than 3 years, and (c) possess in-depth knowledge about instructional leadership practices during the era of accountability. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom for this basic qualitative research design.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of Participants*

Participant	Title	School level	Years in education	Years in school district	Years at current school
P1	Principal	Primary	18	18	5
P2	Principal	Senior	20	11	5
P3	Principal	Primary	20	20	7
P4	Principal	Primary	24	23	4
P5	Principal	Primary	32	22	8
T1	Teacher	Senior	22	8	8
T2	Teacher	Senior	31	7	7
T3	Teacher	Senior	25	2	2
T4	Teacher	Senior	8	8	8
T5	Teacher	Middle	24	3	3
T6	Teacher	Middle	3	2	2
T7	Teacher	Middle	25	25	7
T8	Teacher	Primary	24	24	10
T9	Teacher	Primary	4	4	2
T10	Teacher	Senior	19	18	19
T11	Teacher	Middle	5	4	2

**Data Collection**

The data collection process commenced after I received approval from the school district commissioner and IRB approval from Walden University (approval 09-08-21-

0725439). I immediately moved to the next step of the interview protocol refinement framework, which was to receive feedback on the interview protocol and pilot it. The feedback of two colleagues (one deputy principal and one teacher) familiar with conducting interviews and instructional leadership was solicited. The interview protocol was sent via email to the reviewers, who examined the structure, length, and ease of understanding while paying particular attention to the ethical and cultural sensitivity of the interview questions. Minor recommendations were offered for modifying the protocol. For example, the initial question for administrators was "What do you think motivates teachers in your school?" I was advised to have administrators describe their strategies to motivate teachers in their school. The initial question for teachers was, "Would you describe your administrator as an instructional leader why or why not?" However, it was changed to "How would you describe your administrator's leadership style?"

I conducted the pilot study to initiate data collection. I developed the interview protocol based on the instructional management framework developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). The pilot study consisted of interviews with one principal and one teacher. The interviews were conducted in October 2021 and occurred on separate days via Zoom. The purpose of the interviews was to ensure that the interview instrument would work as intended in actual practice and to identify potential logistical problems. The pilot interviews helped me refine my interview techniques, and I could note possible probing questions. After I conducted the interviews, I transcribed each recorded interview within 3 days. The transcription attested to the importance of maintaining volume and

conducting interviews in a quiet environment. Characteristics of the pilot study sample are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Pilot Study Participants*

Participant	Title	School level	Years of experience	Duration of interviews
P1	Principal	Senior	15	30 mins
T1	Teacher	Primary	22	28 mins

The pilot study yielded useful findings. I realized the importance of not making extraneous comments during the interviews and abstaining from interrupting participants while they were giving their responses. There were no major changes made to the protocol; therefore a modified IRB approval was not required.

### **Data Collection**

I emailed the seven principals and 15 teachers, inviting them to participate in the study. I obtained the email addresses from the school district's public domain. I requested that participants reply to the email, "I consent to participate in the study." 16 participants who were teachers and administrators (principals) from the primary, middle, and senior schools confirmed their participation in the interview process. A follow-up email was sent to schedule the individual interviews at a mutually agreed-upon time. One challenge was scheduling the interviews, as most schools were transitioning from virtual instruction to either face-to-face or hybrid instruction. Before interviews, the researcher reminded participants of the purpose of the research, and the confidentiality before, during, and after the interviews. The consent form was also reviewed, and any questions asked were answered or clarified before the interview. At the beginning of each interview,

participants permitted me to record the interviews. To maintain confidentiality, I interviewed all participants virtually, using Zoom at home or from my office. I informed our participants that their identities would be protected. Using Zoom allowed the participants to be in their natural setting, whether in their homes or school office, and they could respond to each interview question at their own pace. I used the same interview protocol to assist me in asking the same open-ended questions to both administrator and teacher; however, various probing and clarification questions were asked during some interviews. I attempted to ask as many probing questions as possible to keep the interviews between 25-30 minutes; however, it became clear that some participants did not need as much time to describe the instructional practices in their school. The duration of the interviews ranged from 20 to 32 minutes. All interviews were completed over 5 weeks. Table 3 presents the location, frequency, and duration of each interview.

**Table 2**

*Location, Frequency, and Duration of Each Participant Interview*

Participant	Location	Duration
P1	Principal home office	29 mins
P2	Principal office	33 mins
P3	Principal office	20 mins
P4	Principal office	25 mins
P5	Principal office	28 mins
T1	Teacher office	25 mins
T2	Teacher home office	31 mins
T3	Teacher home office	28 mins
T4	Teacher home office	23 mins
T5	Teacher office	15 mins
T6	Teacher office	24 mins
T7	Teacher office	24 mins
T8	Teacher office	22 mins

T9	Teacher classroom	28 mins
T10	Teacher office	25 mins
T11	Teacher office	20 mins

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After completing the interviews, I reminded participants that I would send them a copy of their transcript for their review so they could review, edit or make corrections. I transcribed each interview verbatim within 3-5 days into a Microsoft Word document to avoid data piling (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Transcribing the interview by hand allowed me to be immersed in the data reading, to make sense of the participants' narratives, and to ensure that I was in control of the process and the eventual report of results. The completed transcriptions were emailed to each participant for edits or corrections, and member checking allowed participants to confirm or deny the accuracy and interpretations of data. Two participants added a few details to extend their responses.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis was completed after interviews were conducted, transcribed, and the interviewees approved all transcripts. A three-stage coding procedure using inductive coding strategies was used. Each interview transcript was printed in hardcopy for easy review. I was engaged in the manual transcription of the interview data. After transcribing, the data was read multiple times to get familiar with the responses from the participants. The researcher utilized the ten instructional leadership functions from Hallinger and Murphy's instructional leadership framework. I initiated a line-by-line open coding process of one transcript at a time. The first coding cycle was completed by highlighting keywords and phrases used by each participant. Coding involves the grouping and labeling of data segments (Ngulube, 2015) and is attached to words,

phrases, or sentences representing aspects of data or capturing data's essence or features (Clark & Vealé, 2018; Ngulube, 2015). I then created a spreadsheet in which I listed the words or phrases, and then similar phrases or words were grouped until a pattern of themes emerged. I then labeled the themes that emerged and coded statements from the interview under each label for further analysis. The analysis gave rise to three (3) central themes. Each central theme is comprised of sub-themes based on the frequent codes from the participants' answers. The themes and subthemes are presented in Table 4.

**Table 3**

*Central Themes and Subthemes*

Theme	Subtheme
Theme 1: Understanding of Instructional Leadership	Direct relation of instructional leadership to the processes of instruction Direct practices undertaken by the principal to support teachers
Theme 2: Common Instructional Leadership Practices	Communication of the school goals Data-driven decision to monitor student progress Promotion of effective professional development Maintainance of visibility Teacher incentives/motivation
Theme 3: Challenges of Instructional Leadership	Time COVID-19 pandemic Better utilization of data Classroom instructional leader Lack of communication Lack of school culture and compassion

These themes were further discussed in the presentations of data results in the next following section. Throughout the analytic process, I maintained integrity by interpreting the data by the verbatim statements of the participants.



### **Theme 1: Understanding of Instructional Leadership**

The first theme from the data analysis was understanding the term instructional leadership used in this British Territory. Hallinger (1992) concurs that because instructional leadership means different things to different people, the term consistently has conceptual and practical limitations. Question #1 asked all 16 participants to define instructional leadership because the researcher did not want the other questions to influence the participants' responses. Two participants did not respond initially, and one hesitated when asked the question. The responses did not yield textbook-style definitions, but the responses defined the term in terms of the day-to-day responsibilities of the instructional leader or the important functions that administrators were expected to perform.

According to Hallinger and Murphy (1987), school leaders have formulated their definitions based on their experience and expectation. However, this lack of a precise definition is one of the weaknesses in the research and has led to miscommunication, role conflict, and low principal evaluation ratings (Stronge et al., 2008). Although there were varying definitions from both principals and teachers about what instructional leadership entails, the data revealed that the participants had some understanding of the concept of 'instructional leadership.' However, their understanding and foci could be broken into two main headings (a) instructional leadership is directly related to the instruction processes- The teachers, the learners, and the curriculum (b) instructional leadership include the actions undertaken by the principal to support teachers for and better student outcomes.

### ***A Focus on the Processes of Instruction***

Within the interviews, instruction which includes the teachers, the learners, and the curriculum, was mentioned frequently to define instructional leadership. P2 said, “Instructional leadership is when the leader of the building is aware of all the curriculum and instructional needs in order to move a school. I feel being an instructional leader means that you should be working directly with building leaders and teachers to implement the many different levels of the curriculum and also to provide teachers with the latest strategies for teaching and learning.” P3 states, “Instructional leadership is just really about being able to provide feedback which is around their instruction.” P4 said, “I would define instructional leadership as having to do with curriculum and instruction, particularly modeling by principals to show the effective ways in which curriculum can be delivered and how instruction can be modified for different students.” T1 said, “For me, Instructional leadership is a method or mode of leadership that focuses on working with teachers to focus instruction on particular goals or vision, so that teachers have common and, hopefully, best-practice instructional methods.” T3 said, “The management of the teaching-learning process in schools.” T10 “Instructional leadership is when an educator or someone in the field of education takes the initiative and tries to use Innovative teaching practices in their environment and is always trying to use up-to-date science-based instructional strategies.”

### ***Direction to Support Teachers***

Principals and teachers typically define instructional leadership in terms of the actions and responsibilities of the principal. P1 asserts, "Instructional leadership I find it

is basically the crux of what we do as principals. It's more than just feedback to teachers. I believe instructional leadership also heavily involves a coaching component as well."

P3 states, "For me Instructional leadership involves a me, and I will refer to myself working with teachers side by side with regards to observing their teaching, observing the learning and then providing feedback to teachers. This is specifically around and always focusing on the students. What are the students learning and what have they learned as a result of the feedback." P3 further explained, "usually I work with them, it is not just giving you a piece of paper and goals, its observation, it's modeling, its conversation. P5 articulated, "The leader works alongside the teacher and discusses data; best instructional practices and ensures that teachers are provided with coaching support in any area that needs improvement." T2 uttered, "An instructional leader is a leader/supervisor who is exemplary in providing guidance and support to his/her staff; while determining and identifying best practices and facilitating Personal Development to achieve students' achievement." Another teacher states that instructional leadership is "Providing ongoing and consistent support, feedback and guidance, by way of observation, collaboration and formal/informal communication with members of staff. According to T4, an instructional leader should be capable of coaching an individual or team, providing suggestions when problem-solving, and sharing instructional and pedagogical best practices. She further stated that the instructional leader should seek (and try to attain) resources and tools for staff, be a listening ear, provide authentic and meaningful evaluations, and be a model/example for the team. T9 describes instructional leadership as "one type of leadership that deals with teachers and student learning. It involves monitoring

everything that is done within the school." She further mentioned, "It is about leaders or administrators being an example, showing other leaders in the school how to supervise and evaluate instruction. It is using the data to monitor student learning and instruction in their schools." she concluded by stating, "instructional leadership should focus on managing individuals (teams) and resources effectively; it should also involve engagement and building relationships with teachers with the intention of inspiring them to be innovative."

## **Theme 2: Common Instructional Leadership Practices**

The discussion about instructional leadership practices is not exhaustive, as the interpretation of the term instructional leadership is based on the practices of school leaders in a different context. Although different interpretations exist, the consensus among scholars is that instructional leadership practices are contributing factors that support teachers and increase student achievement (Alsaleh, 2019; Day et al., 2016; Hallinger et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2017; Turkoglu & Cansoy, 2018). Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional leadership model categorized leadership practices into ten instructional leadership functions. These were used to guide the interview protocol; not all functions were coded as common instructional leadership practices used by participants in this British Territory to increase student achievement. Although it is clear that instructional leadership is an essential characteristic of schools, there is still a struggle to identify the practices that define the role of the instructional leader. The common practices that emerged from the data are: (a) communicating the school goals (b) data-driven decision to monitor student progress (c) creating a conducive climate

*Subtheme: Communication of School Goals*

Communicating the school goals is one of the ten instructional leadership functions as proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). While communicating the school goals may seem less important than other instructional leadership practices, research suggests otherwise (Sanchez, 2019). The communication of the school goals to teachers, students, and parents is one of the most important attributes of an instructional leader and is the hallmark dimension of high-performing schools (Goldring & Pasternack, 1994; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The interviewed principals emphasized the importance of communicating the school goals with all stakeholders, including department leaders, teachers, students, parents, and the wider community. P2 asserted, "I think it is my role to lead the vision and to communicate what we need to do with the leaders on the various levels and to ensure that we are maintaining some level of instruction so that our students are learning. Interviews with administrators and teachers confirmed that the school goals are communicated using different mediums (See Table \_\_\_ below). These were further classified into two main categories- electronic or social media and Formal and informal interaction (See table \_\_\_\_). The school administrator communicating or publicizing the goals, can show stakeholders how the school goals interact with instruction, curriculum, budgetary decisions, and the school's success (Hallinger et al., 2015; Kumar, 2019). Although the school goals are communicated regularly, formally or informally, the information is shared with each stakeholder using specific mediums:

- Staff- emails, newsletter, weekly bulletins, Whatsapp, common planning time (CPT), staff meetings, department meetings, PD, morning announcements.

- Parents- emails, newsletter, weekly bulletins, WhatsApp/social media/websites, parent meeting /parent conference.
- Students -assemblies, advisory, classroom sessions/ conversations, morning announcements.

The analysis of data showed that the school goals are communicated to different stakeholders using specific medium. This was confirmed by P2 who acknowledged that there are different ways in which the school goals are communicated to stakeholders. It was further stated that for students there are morning announcements and teachers share information with students in their advisories. School-wide assemblies take place frequently for the benefit of the students. For staff there are monthly staff meetings and weekly bulletins. Parents received weekly bulletins and frequent emails. PTSA Meetings are also held monthly. P4 state “so there is actual constant conversation to our parents we communicate via monthly newsletters and we also have monthly PTA meetings where certain things are reiterated, objectives are reiterated with regard to the students there is constant daily conversation in the classes the intentional posting of specific objectives and the reiteration of the use of specific strategies that’s a daily occurrence. With our staff there are regular monthly staff meetings but we also have CPT time. T4 and T9 added that the school goals are communicated at the beginning of the academic year. T4 further claimed “the overarching goals for the school are communicated to staff during a meeting (and via email/PowerPoint attachment), and shared with parents and students via a newsletter. T5 commented “I would say through emails. Parents would collect information through having WhatsApp groups with the team leaders. We have our

understanding through our group chats on WhatsApp as teachers. T9 further relates “I know that heads of year levels communicate with parents through quarter meetings and websites and the school has Parent teachers meeting at least once per month to inform parents about what is happening.”

Another observation made from the analysis of data is that all stakeholders are integral in communicating the school goals to increase student achievement, but not only do teachers play a pivotal role in communicating the goals to students, they are the main channel through which goals are communicated to students. T1 asserted that from the Core Leadership Team (CLT) meetings, administrators pass down information to middle management and middle management passes them down to teachers in common planning meetings and department meetings. T4 agreed stating “as new goals are created throughout the year &/or amended, it tends to be shared with team leaders and funneled through department meetings &/or communicated during monthly staff meetings.” Table 5 shows the media mentioned in participant responses.

**Table 4**

*Communication Media Mentioned in Participant Responses*

Medium	Participant
Emails	P1, P2, P5, T1, T2, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T10
Parent meeting or conference	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, T2, T9
Assemblies	P2, T2, T7, T8
Advisory	P2, T2, T3
Weekly bulletins	P2
Newsletter	P4, T1, T4
Common planning time	P4, T1
Staff meetings	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, T1, T2, T4, T6, T7, T9
Department meetings	T1, T6, T7

Classroom sessions or conversations	P4, T2, T8
WhatsApp, social media, or websites	T5, T8, T9, T10
Professional development	P5, T1, T3, T6
Morning announcements	P2

Table 6 includes a categorization of the different media.

**Table 5**

*Categories of Communication Media Mentioned in Participant Responses*

Category	Type of media	No. of responses
Electronic or social media	Emails; newsletter; weekly bulletins; and WhatsApp, social media, or websites	21
Formal and informal interaction	Parent meeting or conference, assemblies, advisory, common planning time, staff meeting, department meetings, classroom sessions or conversations, professional development, morning announcements	33

Messina (2018) stated that the mission statement should be routinely communicated because regular and brief reminders of the purpose increase productivity by 100%.

***Subtheme: Data-Driven Decision to Monitor Student Progress***

The monitoring of student progress is another essential practice that is strongly associated with student achievement. One of the central components of instructional leadership is using data to raise achievement (Halverson et al., 2007). In the interviews administrators were asked “How do you use data to monitor and improve student achievement?” And teachers were asked “What role should the principal play regarding the use of data to guide instruction?” The data from the interview with principals revealed that they had access to different data sources that could increase student achievement. This was confirmed by P2 who states “To monitor student achievement using data there are many different methods in which we do that.” Specific examples of data collected are



academic, attendance and discipline (P2), Reading benchmarks (P3, P4) Mathematics (P4) and teacher observations (P4). P4 also stated “I collect data as it pertains to how the classroom look, the engagement of students, again the differentiation of work whether or not for example in a classroom there’s specific things that should be in a classroom like anchor charts there should be resources readily available for students and those type of things.”

The analysis also shows that teachers believe different data should be collected to monitor student progress effectively. T2 state “It is paramount that the Principal collect all data from grades, attendance, truancy, career pathways, teacher comments; content level of difficulty; teacher recommendations among others to guide instruction. T4 states “The use of data should not be collected in one manner, but rather, the principal should provide feedback on varied methods of collecting data and specific strategies for how it can help improve instruction and ultimately student learning.”

As part of instructional leadership, principals are expected to demonstrate "data leadership," which means instructional leaders' data literacy and data use and supporting teachers' data literacy and data use (Roegman et al., 2018). The analysis showed that all administrators saw themselves as leaders that use data to support their teachers and make informed and knowledgeable decisions that can foster student growth and performance. P2 shared how he used data to support teachers and her instructional programs:

On a weekly basis all of the students’ academic, attendance and discipline data is placed into a Google folder weekly data drops. The data is viewed by instructional leaders and members of the school student support team to develop interventions

for struggling students. As a leader I look at the data on a weekly basis and discuss the data during the instructional leadership meetings. So let me give you this example the Instructional leader for science For instance, what happens when that leader looks at the data right, how does that leader see I see a gap I see something, happening, we have too many students Not meeting success here do we stop instruction For a time and go to remediate and do immediate interventions or do we continue to go? so I think I feel as if it's important that we go back and revisit the expectations of how we should be using the data So we can ensure we are drilling down to every student and looking at how we should be moving the student.

P2 was further probed to speak about the idea of data drops as a means of monitoring student progress. He explained that on Monday mornings the Deputy principals for academics, attendance, and discipline post data into a Google folder. From there the SIST Teams (teams that are assigned according to year levels) look at the data and then plan for interventions. He stated that instructional leaders for each department are also able to access the data so that they can work with their teams to address any needs if need be. Schildkamp et al., (2019) asserted that principals are responsible for monitoring student progress and improving student achievement by utilizing all types of data that provides information on the functioning of schools.

From the analysis of the responses from participants concerning data, some words and phrases were reoccurring and created patterns in addition to sub-themes. Some of the recurrent words and phrases in participant responses were communicating/ sharing the

data, understanding the data, data discussion or data conversation, intentional, strategic, gaps, access to data, change and motivate, delegates, modeling. After grouping these words/ phrases the sub-themes that emerged are (a) data conversations (b) instructional leaders' role in data use.

**Data conversations.** Wayman et al., (2012) avows that school leaders can both enable or hinder data use, and this hindrance results from not meeting teachers in time to discuss data that will improve instruction (Schildkamp et al., 2019). The data revealed that an abundance of data is collected, so instructional leaders must help teachers understand and makes sense of the data. P1 shared, "The first thing I do is actually share the data out, right so I share the data with teachers and depending on the type of data I share with parents so that way everyone understands where we are." He further commented "I find that as a school even our system we kind a keep the data to ourselves like it's a secret and people just don't know it so I think if people know the data and understand the data then you get more buy-in from the stakeholders as far as where you want to take your school." When the data is shared and conversations are held, teachers are able to ascertain how they are doing and can use that information provided to improve their instruction (T9). The conversations also enable collaboration, more intentional planning and instruction and develop interventions for struggling students (P2). P3 further endorses the importance of data conversations in her school. She pointed out "I think it's been an eye-opener for them; initially it was like extra work but it's come to a point where they are seeing and I think they get excited when they're seeing growth. Without data they just feel like they are spinning their wheel so I've seen a change in their

demeanor towards looking at data and then it kinda motivates them when they do see improvements.” T1 noted that data conversations should be held “so that as changes are made, the reasons are clear.”

**Instructional leaders’ role in data use.** All interviewees referred to the role that instructional leaders should play in using data to increase student achievement. Still, the teachers interview question specifically solicited responses about the role their instructional leaders play regarding the use of data in the school. School leaders play a critical role in the performance of students and researchers have posited that school leaders have the second highest influence on student performance (Harris et al., 2017; Ismail et al., 2018; Marzano et al., 2005). The analyzed data showed that teachers believe that one of the role of the instructional leader includes: (a) collaborating with the heads of department and teachers. T2 noted that her instructional leaders should designate persons to compile the findings for dissemination. T1 believes the Principal should work with department leaders to continuously assess data, maintain consistent observation of teacher instructional practices, as well as carry out continuous research. T4 agrees stating “Principal’s should also play the role of connecting educators (strength to strength, or strength to weakness), based on data, to foster collaborative opportunities to outline strategies responses to the data.” School leaders are expected to engage in data analysis and support their teachers in using data to drive instruction (Gelderblom et al., 2016; Neumerski, 2013). (b) Model how data is used. T8 commented “I definitely think that principal should model anything before delivering it to the staff. Modeling with clear intention of goals or past data as well.” (c) Communicate the information about the data.

T10 posits “My belief is the principals main job is to communicate to the faculty heads and team leaders what he /she is looking for. So I would say in terms of data, she delegates. T1 added “All of this should be continuously communicated to teachers, so that as changes are made, the reasons are clear.” (d) Facilitate changes for school improvement. T3 opined “the principal is expected to use data to facilitate changes by providing resources teachers and students may need to improve the teaching learning process, make improvements relating to instruction, drive new policies and workshops governing instruction within the school.” T6 also expressed “the principal should utilize data to be the driving force for the success of the school academically, behaviorally, and socially.” (e) ensure meaningful data is used. T4 posits “The principal should ensure that teachers are administering meaningful assessments (before learning, during and post) to collect data that will inform their instruction.”

***Subtheme: Creation of a Conducive Climate***

Developing a positive school learning climate is the third dimension in Hallinger and Murphy’s instructional leadership model. Of the three dimensions of Hallinger and Murphy’s instructional leadership model, this dimension is the one that best predicts school performance (Rainey, 2019). To gather data about the climate of the school, I asked the following questions from the interview protocol (see Appendix): school administrators (Questions 5, 8, 9, 10) and teachers (Question 7, 8, 9). The analysis of the data from these questions revealed that although Hallinger and Murphy mentioned five instructional leadership practices in this dimension, based on the interviews only three of the practices were more pronounced: promoting PD, maintaining high visibility, and

providing incentives for teachers. This analysis also supports the conclusion that this dimension is the broadest, comprises half of the conceptual model and contains a multitude of leadership practices that contribute to student achievement (Hallinger et al., 2015; Kumar, 2019; White, 2016). The practices revealed from the analysis of the interviews will be discussed below.

**Promotion of Effective Professional Development.** One of the instructional leadership practices identified from the interview supporting student achievement is promoting high quality PD. Robinson et al., (2008) contend that the leadership practice most strongly associated with positive student outcomes is promoting and participating in PL and PD. Instructional leaders should be continuously involved in promoting PD, which would affect school outcomes and trigger commitment and excellence from teachers for increased quality of teaching instruction. Terosky (2016) asserts that principals concerned about instruction will evaluate how instruction is delivered, the teachers' professional growth, the increase of student achievement, and the quality education that the student receives. During the interview both administrator and teachers were asked to tell the researcher about PD in their schools including how PD is determined, who provides it, the areas of focus and how the information from the PD is expected to be used.

The principals agreed that the analysis of school data, the school improvement plan and the information from the administered teacher questionnaire and surveys drive the focus of the PD session. P1 states “I utilize my teacher leaders to assess where we need to grow as a school so I have my teacher leaders in Math, Science, Social Studies,

and literacy actually look into their subject areas and report to me where they think we need to grow. What are they using to determine? How do you know that we need to grow in vocabulary instruction?" P2 who was quite detailed in the response to PD states "I am a strong believer in order for us to facilitate PD for our staff and in order for it to be meaningful it has to be two prongs right so one aspect of it is we have to revisit and go back and look at our school goals and when we talk about school improvement we are really looking at the accreditation that took place five years ago and we are we using that as our goals to continuously improve." To further expand on his response P2 commented that "I think that part of PD for needs assessment if we know what the all of our staff are whether its content needs, whether it it just classroom management or whether it's just in some cases with some of our teachers are going to use this word enrichment needs." P4 posits "sure so our PD internally definitely revolves around the school improvement plan. So looking at the school improvement plan, looking at the objectives whether we have met the objectives from the previous year will determine what additional PD on site we may need." P3 and P5 refer to completing a needs assessment as well as using data from questionnaires and surveys to decide of PD needs. P3 states "Of course I have to keep the school improvement plan in mind but what I have done differently this year especially is that I have sent out a google doc asking what they need asking what they think they need because lots of time what I might give might not be appropriate for everyone." P5 postulates "Teachers are administered a questionnaire at the end of each school year where they are asked to identify the areas they need assistance with." Researchers contend that the best PD sessions are designed to respond to a specific school need,

facilitate what to do in actual classroom practice, and contribute to lessening the learning gap (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018; Patton et al., 2015).

Traditionally PD are generally formal workshops or courses delivered by an outside expert to large groups of staff members and lack the focus required to have a substantial impact on student learning or change how teachers deliver their instruction (Brown, 2019; Smith, 2017). Traditional teacher PD is usually determined by school leadership, is content-focused, passive, and intermittent (Smith, 2017). From the interviews conducted it was revealed that PD is provided by different sources such as school administrators, department leaders, representatives from the Department of Education, school professional directors, the teacher unions and from accredited online platforms. The data also showed that PD is delivered throughout the school year. P2 states “We currently have a PD director at the school.” P2 further indicated “I want to be able to have teachers go online and do whether its Coursea or EdX all of these accredited platforms to meet their personal needs with PD in which they would do it independently and at the end they would do it in a period of time in which they will get that that certificate to improve what their needs.” P4 refer to using representatives from the department of education such as math coordinators and standard Based grading officers to offer PD to the staff. T1 states “PD was in the form of multi-faceted workshops, generally guided by the school’s Director of PD. Workshops could be hosted by external or internal experts on certain areas.” T2, T3 and T4 posit that PD is done regularly, usually, once monthly and at least 2 days when there is a Mid-term break. They also mentioned that the PD is provided in conjunction with the Principal and the Director of



Staff Development and Instruction.” T6 comments “My principal provides PD for the staff during staff meetings and during PD mandated dates. My principal also shares other PD opportunities with staff ongoing throughout the year. Staff is also encouraged to seek PD opportunities as well.” T10 states “Once a month we meet in our faculties and for PD that's usually run or facilitated by the officer for my subject and once per term we have like a full staff PD and that is usually dictated by someone from the Department of Education.”

Supovitz et al., (2010) relate that improving teaching practices is the principal's responsibility in their schools. The principal must be acquainted with the need for PD; therefore, knowledge is vital to PD's implementation and overall functionality. Grogan and Andrews (2002) state that the principal is the lynchpin between teacher development and school improvement. The school administrator is crucial in teachers' PD as they are connected to the school's goals, mission, instructional program, and overall progress.

**Maintenance of Visibility.** Maintaining high visibility was identified by interviewees as another instructional leadership practice that increases students' achievement. Visibility means modeling desired expectations, being in regular contact with teachers, students, parents, and the wider school community and conducting walkthroughs to observe, interact, and provide constructive feedback and finally being visible around the school (Hallinger, 2005; Marzano, et al., 2005; Vinitwatanakhun & Sawatsupaphon, 2019; Waters et al., 2003). To gather data about the visibility and the instructional leaders, teachers were asked to tell how the school administrators spend majority of their day. Not all teacher participants commented positively to the question

asked. Some teachers thought their administrator was visible while others were not sure or did not see their principal throughout the day. T2, T3, T6, T9 and T10 commented positively about the visibility of their school administrators. T3 and T9 both commented that their principals are seen from the moment students enter the school building and during the lunch period. T6 states “She also sits amongst students during lunch daily.” The other ways the school principals’ visibility was observed is during observations and monitoring of instruction (T3, T6, T10); stemming disciplinary problems (T2, T10); visiting year level assemblies and giving speeches (T2). As was aforementioned some teacher interviewees responses about the visibility were negative. T4 posits “I’m not sure. I imagine the majority is spent in the main office &/or in meetings with other members of the administrative team or members of the Department of Education.” T5 simply stated “I don't know. I don't see her. She stays in the office.”

Additional data was gathered when school administrators were asked to describe their direct involvement in teachers ‘classroom over the last 2 years. A principal’s visibility on the school campus indicates that they place interaction with students and faculty high on their list of priorities which can positively affect management of the school, teacher pedagogy, and student achievement. All principals agreed that their visibility was seen in visiting classrooms, conducting walkthroughs, sitting and interacting with students. P5 states “classes are visited at least twice per week and feedback is provided by the end of the day.” P4 commented that during her preparation times she is able to visit specific classrooms twice per week to give feedback to teachers whether it's instructional delivery or just pointers on how to enhance a task. P3 responded

“a very easy question to answer. It's every day, every class whether it's just observing or sitting with students. it's constant for me because I have a small school so I can do that. So, it's either I'm just observing or sometimes I interject and kind of co-teach with the teacher or I just sit with the students and see what they are doing.” Researchers concluded that primary and secondary school leaders differ in terms of instructional leadership and visibility (Firestone & Herriott, 1982). This was evident during the analysis of data as some primary and middle school principals at dual roles which becomes a challenge. P4 states “in my role as a principal at the primary level going into the classroom has been limited because I actually have a class.” At the senior level, principals devote more time to non-instructional responsibilities and so become office-bound because they have the assistance of deputy principals and department leaders. P2 pointed out “my involvement is almost direct and indirect working with the instructional leadership team and Deputy principal for academics.” He further noted “Yes I have visited some classrooms but more importantly is leading the team to look at the barriers that we would face because regardless of what happens we will still have to deliver our curriculum.”

**Provision of Incentives for Teachers.** Providing incentives for teachers is an important instructional leadership practice in creating a positive learning climate, so principals must set up work structures that reward (Geleta & Ababa, 2015); recognize teachers for their efforts (Hallinger et al., 2015); and support and motivate their teachers to achieve the goals of the school (Kumar (2019). Teacher Motivation has become an important issue that still needs to be investigated more. Teachers' motivation level have a crucial role directly affecting students and their achievement. What motivates a teacher to

work hard? What are the kinds of incentives offered to teachers for their hard work? To ascertain what motivation looks like in the schools both principal and teacher participants were asked specific questions. Principals were asked to describe the strategies they use to motivate teachers in their schools, while teachers responded to the question “What motivates you as a teacher? These questions were asked because Hallinger and Murphy (1985) stated that the principal's creation of a system of rewards and recognition for teachers' efforts increase student learning and achievement. All principals identified specific ways they provided incentives for teachers. P1 states “We do utilize extrinsic rewards and not big-ticket things for example free grub day teachers love things like that. We often have breakfast, cupcakes and treats or things like that just to keep staff motivated. We celebrate everything. I think that family atmosphere makes everyone's lives a little bit easier on staff.” P2 postulates “It's random it doesn't happen regularly but we do try to entice teachers with whether is a dress-down Friday or when we do have those special occasions to have giveaways or recognition breakfast or something like that. P3 comments “There's not one big thing I find ways to praise teachers. I do a Fab Five on every Friday. I find five things that I've seen throughout the school and I emailed everyone so that they can see what's going on and they really enjoyed that. It's just little praises, personal connection with teachers is very key as well.” P4 described that she motivates teachers in different ways such as going into classrooms and giving feedback, touching base with teachers regularly and giving teachers specific resources. She further states that “Well I will tell you it has been very difficult especially within the last two years, but our climate committee has worked really hard trying to engage staff with little

events either inside or outside of school.” P5 indicated specific ways she motivates teachers. She noted “Teachers are motivated through weekly newsletters and various events. I also use positive feedback; rigorous dialogue, baked goods, complimentary lunches, snacks during staff meetings, and the ultimate- Staff Appreciation Week!” Providing incentives for teachers is one factor that is needed to develop the teaching and learning process and to ensure that the school environment is conducive to learning. Although research has proven that both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives can lead to the motivation of teachers, the analysis of data from the interviews conducted revealed that teachers were mainly self-motivated. T2 posits that she is motivated when her students can apply concepts learnt to real life situations; when there is an indication of a change in behavior because learning had taken place; and when her students demonstrate that the content acquired transcends into good grades. T5- What motivates me is to see me progress in my students myself. I get excited when I see them getting excited because they know that they've learned something. T4 states she is motivated when her students become curious, focused and are eager to learn. When she receives positive feedback from students on classroom instruction/activities. When there are productive collaborative sessions with colleagues and team leaders; when leaders/administration ‘get in the trenches’ with teachers and provide timely support and recognize high-stress situations and help to work through or alleviate stress

### **Theme 3: Challenges of Instructional Leadership**

Administrators and teachers identified several improvements that they believe are needed for instructional leadership to be more impactful on student achievement. While

school leaders expressed their desire to be effective instructional leaders and teachers expect to be supervised by efficient and supportive administrators, obstacles perceived as necessary to overcome were identified. The interview question for principals and teachers was "What aspect of instructional leadership do you think needs improvement in your school?" The following obstacles were identified:

**Time.** One improvement principals identified that is needed is not enough time. P1 noted that time management and better utilization of time are factors. He states that his teachers and himself ask themselves, it is now, or can this wait? He further postulates, "I like to get things sort of done, but then I reflect on my day and wonder, could I have done that after school and go into a classroom?" P4 also identified time as an aspect of instructional leadership that could be improved. She stated, "I think again, time is always a factor. If we just had an endless amount of time that was not tied up in administrative tasks certainly focusing on instructional practices looking at lesson planning and being able to support teachers in their data collection and then their use of that data effectively."

**Data Analysis.** Although research has shown that school leaders are to engage in data analysis and support their teachers in using data to drive instruction (Gelderblom et al., 2016), participants identified some barriers that need to address to promote more data use. P1 states that as a principal, he believes that he needs to go back and "deep dive" into his school's data and identify the areas for improvement. He further states, "I say better utilization of data pinpointing specific students and targeting instruction. I think we can grow in that regard. We do collect quite a bit of data, and the feedback I get from the staff is that we do a great job in collecting data, but we need to grow in utilizing that data and

drilling deep into how we can create plans for success for kids." P2 added, "I think we need to do a reset as to what we are doing with the data." He elaborated that the data is "at our fingertips, but now we need to reset because it is going in and being a bit more intentional. I think it is important that we go back and revisit the expectations of how we use the data to ensure we are drilling down to every student and looking at how we should be moving the student." Data utilization is critical when monitoring student progress as it may be used to enhance student achievement both systematically and on an individual student level (Lashley & Stickl, 2016). However, because of hybrid learning, teachers noted that they do not trust the data they receive. T8 admitted, "I do not really trust the data I'm receiving, if that makes sense. I don't because within the past two years, being on Zoom and out of school and then in school, that constant distraction to the school year, it's hard to get a good gist of where the students are. Because it is so much data, it is sometimes confusing to look at as well."

*Teaching Instructional Leader.* Another challenge identified from the data that has negatively impacted some principals is the conflicting role demands of being an instructional leader and a classroom teacher. The data revealed that this issue was particularly apparent at the primary level with low student enrollment. Because of the competing demands of the roles, some principals struggle to balance being the instructional leader and a classroom teacher. As P3 stated, "Well, I am in a unique situation here. I am going into my third year, so it has been a struggle to balance what I can let go of and what I can control with whom I have in the building." She further noted that the problem of being the principal and a classroom teacher is further exacerbated

because no other leaders are assigned in the building to provide insights and help with the challenges that arise. She disclosed, "We are supposed to have teacher leaders in various disciplines such as Math, Social Studies, Science, and English Language Arts; I have none. It's me. I am the only one. I don't have any, so that has been a struggle for me. It is hard to distribute leadership when I don't have those people in place. That would be an improvement. If I had teacher leaders, I would most certainly be sharing the load and using others' expertise because my expertise is just mine. P4 another teaching administrator, asserts "So specifically in my role as a deputy at the primary level going into the classroom has been limited because I actually have a class; I'm a teaching principal."

**Communication.** Communication is important when leading and principals need to utilize communication skills to coordinate activities within the organization, share information in putting forward facts, data, instructions, direction, and build trust and acceptance of the message receiver (Wikaningrum & Yuniawan, 2018). Research shows a direct link between communicating goals and improved instruction and achievement (Goldring et al., 2009; Leitner, 1994) however some teachers in the British context thought administrators lack of communication negatively impacted their instructional leadership. T4 posits A lot of times the instructional leadership team is responsive in terms of planning and intervention – be it academics, socially or with respect to the most recent COVID-19 pandemic. This tends to result in a lack of trust from staff and students in the leadership, as many would hope that we would anticipate challenges and plan for



them. This can also sometimes cause chaos or stress for staff and students when we try to rush and implement measures relatively or in the midst of the challenge/event/process.

***Lack of Compassion/Culture.*** Compassion is particularly crucial in a school setting (Eldor & Shoshani, 2016). Being compassion means valuing others, being understanding of the needs and feelings of others and having an attitude of openness and receptivity (Underwood, 2009 in Eldor & Shoshani, 2016). During the interviews teachers expressed the lack of compassion from their instructional leaders and leaders expressed the lack of compassion from their immediate supervisors. T5 states “that compassion piece is missed.” She mentioned that the staff just does not feel cared for by the administrators and it's difficult to feel motivated when they do not feel such care from the administrators.” T4 believes administrators need to take the time to connect with staff about their personal goals, career goals etc. She states “many times we are looking to have staff meet the objectives of the organization, with very little time spent pouring into the staff in terms of helping them reach and meet their personal goals ... or even taking an interest in the whole person, rather than just viewing them just as the teacher.” P2 also refer to the lack of compassion from the supervisors of principals. In his response to the interview question he compared his previous stint as a principal in the United States and his current role in the British context. He explained that in his previous experience there were different roles distributed example there was a director of instruction and coaches so he was able to do more as it pertains to instructional leadership, the classroom and classroom teachers. However, in his current context instructional leaders are expected to be principals, coach teachers. He states, “They want us to do so much and looking at the

whole job, it's difficult to do all they expect. The question I ask is those who expects principals to function like that how did they do it? Did their school function? Didn't they lack in some areas?" Compassion influences the climate and the culture of the school and the school culture can influence everything in a school including what staff discusses, how they feel and their willingness to change or adjust their instructional practices. According to Rainey (2019) of the three dimensions of Hallinger and Murphy's instructional leadership model, the dimension Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate is the one that best predicts school performance. The data from the interview revealed that teachers were also concerned about the lack of a school culture in their institution. T5 middle school teacher revealed that her school does not have a school culture. She states "Having it feel like one school. The school is very broken up into year levels and so because of that it doesn't feel like a community it doesn't feel like people doing the same thing as it's very broken up." She continued making reference to one particular concern that comes as a result of the lack of a school culture- No visibility. She contends that the administrator is not visible and she believes that students need to see the principal more. She posits "the principal needs to be a part of the ship that she is sailing; she needs to be noticeable; children shouldn't be asking what her name is." T2 senior school teacher also referred to a lack of culture at her school. She mentioned that because there was no culture there was no school pride. During the interview she was probed to expound on the statement made. She states "a positive school culture needs to exist at every level of the school. Each person who is a part of the school community have an essential role in the process. The Ministry of Education and the principal's energy is

needed, as well as commitment from staff, students, parents, and other custodians to achieving school culture and pride.”

***The COVID-19 Pandemic.*** The COVID-19 pandemic which began in spring 2020 added additional challenges and as a result of the pandemic, the role and responsibilities of instructional leaders have increased across this British context. School instructional leaders were challenged by the changes to instructional strategies, technology, student achievement, teacher motivation, teacher supervision and PD and the mental health of all stakeholders. During the interviews, most participants admitted to the setbacks caused by the COVID-19. The areas of instructional leadership that have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic included:

***Teacher Supervision and Support.*** P2 commented that due to the pandemic it has been challenging to find an effective way to provide effective support for teachers in their classrooms. We have attempted to observe teachers in the classroom by using Google Classroom when we are in remote learning.

***Teacher Motivation.*** The pandemic created setbacks for students and teachers alike. The transition to remote teaching and the constant changes in protocols left many administrators unsure of how to keep teachers motivated and teachers complained of their lack of motivation during the pandemic. P2 principal of 20 years states that motivating teachers during this time became a challenge because he has to find a balance between being in a pandemic with all the other things that are going on and then trying to ensure that instruction is being delivered. He claims that it has been a challenge. T8 teacher of

24 years added “the motivation isn't there at least not as much as before the pandemic yeah I just think it has gone downhill.”

***Decision-making.*** School administrators’ decision making impacts all stakeholders including students, faculty, parents and the community. Consequently, administrators’ decision making became critical, quick and had to be impactful to ensure instruction to students by teachers continued. P4 states “I guess if it's change in the sense that because previously you had some sense of regularity with being able to schedule certain events; however, within the last 2 years its literally it's a day-by-day decision as to whether or not you're going to be continuing with an initiative.”

***Staff Absence.*** The COVID-19 positivity and quarantining resulted in the absence of staff and students, many staff positions remaining unfilled and difficulty in finding substitutes. P4 posits “with teachers being out, with staff and students being out, it definitely he has been challenging to maintain some type of consistency in reaching the goals and ensuring that everyone is understanding the goals.”

***Teaching Responsibilities.*** It was evident during the interviews that many administrators were aware of the challenges their staff and students were facing and felt the disconnect; Nonetheless they had to find the balance in keeping the building safe, develop new ways to monitor teaching and learning, following protocols and maintain a positive school climate. T2 declared “Teaching responsibilities have changed since hybrid teaching was implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic and not all students are together. The work doubled since a board configuration is required as well as one for the Zoom class. Sometimes even the assignments have to be differentiated to suit

different needs. Monitoring is difficult at times since some parents do not help to monitor children. T4 states “due to the pandemic, I have been providing remote instruction to my students for the past 2 years. This translates to becoming more savvy with technological tools; communicating learning objectives, content, and assignments via technological platforms; finding appropriate and authentic ways to deliver instruction and promote student engagement from behind a camera screen – all while being tasked with ensuring that learners continue to reach the same academic standards and benchmarks.” T6 said “The COVID-19 pandemic has interfered with the routines, responsibilities, and expectations of teachers.”

***Professional Development.*** Promoting teachers' PD is the most effective instructional leadership practice (Salleh and Hatta, 2019); therefore, if a school wants to grow, the school personnel need to reinforce the need for teachers' PD. PD was required to increase educators' use of strategies and technology due to the pandemic. However, there were lingering concerns about the type of PD and how PD was offered. T5 revealed "Last year we couldn't do a lot of our PD as a whole together which is not usually the case. We now have to break up in smaller bubbles in order to do PD. Also they are now being done remotely which often changes the responses that are given and people are less likely to participate if they're not in the space to do so. Teachers can get away with not even looking at your screen." T2 states, "PD is usually geared towards different approaches which could be used for classroom instructions, coping strategies and "Grace before Grades" in these difficult times." T3 added, "PD workshops are a norm; however, the focus shifted for some sessions to facilitate issues relating to COVID-19 and different

platforms that teachers can adopt in their virtual classrooms. T8 postulates, "I would say that the effort is there to keep it somewhat the same, but it's been different in terms of it being less effective. I would say that most PD is now on Zoom, and I don't really find that to be as progressive as the administration probably thinks it is. In terms of my instruction, I would say the same; if I'm being honest, it's kind of going down." The interviews revealed that the PD sessions offered were sometimes unconnected, with far too little attention paid to the current realities of teachers' work and daily lives in schools. Brown (2019) and Kreider (2017) relate that these types of PD reflect a legacy of teacher isolation and fragmentation and are often counterproductive, leaving teachers confused and demotivated when attempting to implement a new initiative and encourage teachers to work in isolation instead of fostering a collaborative environment. T5 complained, stating, "when it comes to PD like, where is the choice for your staff to say as a group what do we feel like we need to better serve the students that we have in front of us? T8 concurred and posits that there is not only classroom teachers in the PD sessions, so some of the information shared is irrelevant to other staff members who are not classroom teachers. She suggested that if the PDs were more tailored, then everyone would remain interested.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

In basic qualitative research, the researcher's role is to establish the research study's validity, quality, and rigor. The criteria for trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were executed as articulated in chapter 3.

**Credibility**

Credibility is the most important criterion of the trustworthiness criteria (Connelly, 2016). To establish the study's credibility, the researcher ensured that the data collected aligned with the research question that guided the study. The interview questions were piloted with one principal and one teacher who were qualified to take part in the testing of the interview protocol. The feedback received were used to make minor changes to two questions. Other methods I used to ensure credibility is transcript validation and member checking. The participants were provided a transcript copy to review, confirm or clarify (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Proponents of member checks maintain that such checks enhance the credibility or validity of the research findings (Thomas, 2017).

**Transferability**

Transferability describes the degree to which research findings can be applied to other fields and contexts while maintaining context-specific richness (Kynge et al., 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Transferability affected every research stage, including the research context and topic choice. A rich descriptive account of the setting, sample, interview protocol, and data analysis was provided to apply the results from this sample to other contexts. While transferability of this study is possible, the leadership practices identified may not be generalizable to a broader population; because the findings are limited to one British Territory and the sample size. However, the thick description of the data makes the likelihood that this research finding will be transferable to other similar public schools.

**Dependability**

Dependability concerns consistency across the research starting point (Burkholder et al., 2016). To ensure dependability, the methodological steps of recording interviews and transcribing verbatim what was said were clearly outlined. A secure central database was used to store and manage the data ensuring data integrity. I reported any shift in methodology or data collection that occurred during the research. The findings were presented in a straightforward, concise matter so future researchers can effectively replicate the study and produce the same findings. A study shows high dependability if another researcher can readily follow the decision trail used by the initial researcher (Kyngäs et al., 2019).

**Confirmability**

Confirmability concerns the connection between the data and the results (Kyngäs et al., 2019). As an educator, I needed to ensure that the neutrality and inter-subjectivity of the data were secured. Hence, I guaranteed that the findings were solely shaped by the respondents' data and did not reflect the researcher's bias, motivation, or other interests. The data interpretation was grounded in the data and not based on my particular preferences and viewpoints (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Also, I remained open-minded, neutral, flexible, and continuously reflected on the phenomenon of interest to ensure fidelity to the data produced by the participants. The confirmability issues were reduced by reviewing the interview questions with two research colleagues in the field and adjusting the instrument to better target the research aim. To guarantee that I was not biased, I transcribed the words of the interview verbatim as they were shared with me



during the interview process. The transcripts of precisely what was stated in the interviews helped me to achieve confirmability. Member checking the contents of the data at various stages was another critical strategy in establishing confirmability and integrity in the research process.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 included detailed results of the study. This study aimed to explore instructional leadership's role in increasing student achievement in a public school in a British Territory. Through an in-depth analysis of data gathered through structured interviews, the study started to answer the following research question: How are school administrators using instructional leadership practices to increase student achievement? The data analysis led to 3 thematic findings with supporting sub-themes. The data revealed that the instructional practices administrators used to support student achievement in this British context came mainly from the two dimensions of (a) managing the instructional program and (b) creating a positive climate. The first dimension- defining the school mission- was not as evident in the analysis process.

In Chapter 5, I interpret the results, discuss the study's limitations, offer recommendations for further research, and consider the study's implications for positive social change. I begin with a review and discussion of the themes and how they confirm, refute, or extend the conclusions of previous researchers. Next, I present recommendations for future research based on the findings. Then, I discuss the implications for positive social change. The chapter ends with a conclusion to the study.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

In this qualitative study, I explored instructional leadership's role in increasing student achievement in a public school in a British territory. The basic qualitative approach involves interpreting views and making meaning of experiences, allowing the researcher to explore a phenomenon from a real-world perspective (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Data were collected from 16 participants through semi-structured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews. My aim was to better understand instructional leadership practices from various perspectives. The research question for this study was, How are school administrators using instructional leadership practices to increase student achievement?

The three emergent themes were understanding of instructional leadership, common instructional leadership practices, and the challenges of instructional leadership. Each theme had subthemes that indicated the instructional leadership practices administrators and teachers perceive to increase student achievement. The findings revealed that participants had some knowledge of instructional leadership and most of the practices proposed by the instructional leadership model of Hallinger and Murphy (1985). However, the practices and functions associated with the first dimension were ineffective in increasing student achievement. The data analysis also highlighted challenges that negatively impacted school leaders from implementing effective instructional leadership practices. In this chapter, I discuss the three thematic findings from the data analysis and their relationship to current literature and the conceptual framework. I also discuss the

limitations of the study and the implications of the findings for policy and positive social change.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The Hallinger and Murphy (1985) conceptual framework served as the reference to interpret the findings of this study. I explored the role that instructional leadership plays in increasing student achievement in a public school in a British territory. I interpreted the findings in conjunction with their alignment with the conceptual framework and current research that was discussed in Chapter 2.

#### **Theme 1: Understanding of Instructional Leadership**

Researchers have found that instructional leadership is a strong predictor of school improvement (Hallinger, 2005). When compared to other leadership styles instructional leadership is the more effective leadership style as measured by student outcome (Robinson et al., 2008). Although the concept of instructional leadership has emerged over the years, and research on the concept has increased, there continues to be conflict in the definition of the concept. The data from this research concur with the statement made by researchers that the concept of instructional leadership lacks an explicit definition, and the explicit description is based on the contextual realities of schools. Hallinger (1992), for instance, stated that instructional leadership means different things to different people. The results from this study revealed that school leaders had formulated their definition based on their experience and expectation. In this research, there remained a lack of consensus in defining instructional leadership as participants gave varying definitions of what instructional leadership entails. The data

revealed that they had some understanding of the concept of 'instructional leadership'. However, their understanding and foci of instructional leadership were directly related to the instruction processes (i.e, the teachers, the learners, and the curriculum) or included the actions undertaken by the principal to support teachers for better student outcomes.

In Chapter 2, I noted that the definition of instructional leadership can be either broad or narrow (Bush & Glover, 2003; Yang, 1996). The study findings gave credence to this conclusion. The narrow definition of instructional leadership is the principal's knowledge and skills to provide direction, resources, support for improving teaching and learning, and academic outcomes exclusive of management practices (Ali, 2017; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Keefe & Jenkins, 1991). Participants, as they sought to narrowly define instructional leadership referred to providing feedback, offering modeling by the principal, ensuring that teachers focus on a goal and vision, and using innovative teaching practices. Principals and teachers also broadly defined instructional leadership. The broadest definition of the concept is "an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies to improve teaching and learning" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013, p.7). For example, T9 remarked,

Instructional leadership is one type of leadership that deals with teachers and student learning. It involves monitoring everything that is done within the school. It is about leaders or administrators being an example, showing other leaders in the school how to supervise and evaluate instruction. It is using the data to monitor student learning and instruction in their schools. It should focus on

managing individuals (teams) and resources effectively; it should also involve engagement and building relationships with teachers to inspire them to be innovative.

The results indicate that participating principals and teachers believed that the concept should be broadly defined and involve practices such as (a) coaching; (b) observation; (c) having conversations; (d) discussing data; (e) facilitating personal development; (f) collaboration; (g) informal and formal communication; (h) listening, managing individuals (teams) and resources effectively; (i) engagement, and (j) building relationships with teachers to inspire them to be innovative. The findings of this study are consistent with the definition offered by researchers that instructional leadership is multidimensional and consists of strategies and actions that principals use to build teachers' knowledge and skills and increase student outcomes (De Bevoise, 1984; Fullan et al., 2018; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013; Hallinger & Wang, 2015)

## **Theme 2: Common Instructional Leadership Practices**

The study provided an opportunity to hear from principals and teachers about instructional leadership practices that support student achievement. All participants in this study had an intense interest in classroom practices and their school's overall governance. The findings showed that the interviewed participants understood and could identify the instructional leadership practices in increasing student achievement. Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional leadership model categorizes leadership practices into 10 instructional leadership functions, but only certain instructional leadership practices were found to be more dominant in advancing student achievement.

The first dimension, defining the school mission, was not as evident in the analysis process. However, the data analysis revealed that although Hallinger and Murphy mentioned five instructional leadership practices in the third dimension, only three were more pronounced: promoting PD, maintaining high visibility, and offering teacher incentives. This analysis supports the conclusion that the third dimension is the broadest, comprises half of the conceptual model, and contains many leadership practices contributing to student achievement (Hallinger et al., 2015; Kumar, 2019; White, 2016).

So, although instructional leadership practices are essential to effective schools and administrators, there is still a struggle to identify those standard practices that define the role of instructional leaders. The standard practices that emerged from the findings are: communicating the school goals, data-driven decision to monitor student progress, promoting effective PD, maintaining visibility and teacher incentives/motivation. The discussion of these practices revealed several things.

### ***Communication of School Goals***

Although communicating the school goals may seem less important than other instructional leadership practices to other researchers, this study concurred with research conducted by Sanchez (2019), suggesting otherwise. Although the principal does not always create the mission, their role is to ensure that it is communicated effectively. The analysis revealed that the principals should communicate the school goals with all stakeholders, but teachers and middle management play a more pivotal role in communicating the goals to students; they are the main channel through which goals are communicated to students. The reported communication modes varied as principals used

formal, informal, and electronic means to disseminate information such as emails, newsletters, weekly bulletins, staff meetings, advisory, common planning time, department meetings, assemblies, and Parent conferences. When the communication is transparent, clear, and concise, the administrator shows how the school goals interact with instruction, curriculum, and the school's success (Hallinger et al., 2015; Kumar, 2019). Hallinger et al., (2015) postulate that it is school leaders' responsibility to communicate school goals so all stakeholders support them. Effective communication will impact the school climate and culture, engagement, motivation, and enthusiasm about working together and helping the organization reach its dream (Cascio, 2017; Gooding, 2012, Kumar, 2019).

The study findings also provided insight on data-driven decisions to monitor student progress. Researchers have suggested that data use forms the foundation of instructional leaders' actions and is one essential tool that can be used to increase student achievement (Buske and Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, 2019; Lashley & Stickl, 2016). Many schools in this British territory are accustomed to hearing the message that they should be data-driven and demonstrate data leadership (Roegman et al., 2018). The analysis of this study concluded the following (a) A large amount of data is collected (b) different types of data are used (c) there is some consistency when collecting data (d) school leaders must engage in data leadership to increase student achievement.

During these education reforms, school principals must maintain an instructional and effective school. One way is using different sources of data to help improve various aspects of the school environment. The data confirms the research and the review of

literature that instructional leaders collect a large amount of data from multiple sources such as academic, attendance, discipline, and teacher observations. P1 asserts, "We do collect quite a bit of data, and the feedback I get from the staff is that we do a great job in collecting data, but we need to grow in utilizing that data and drilling deep into how we can create plans for success for kids." P2 states that many different data are collected to monitor student achievement: academic, attendance, and discipline. Although all administrators collect data consistently, it could not be concluded that it was consistently used. P2 concurred, stating that he thinks a reset is needed as to what principals are doing with the data because the data is "at our fingertips." He believes that principals need to be more intentional and revisit the expectations of how the data is used to ensure they are reaching every student. It is important that school principals be consistent about collecting data, but administrators must also maintain that consistency in using data. The One way to ensure consistency in using data is to engage all stakeholders especially classroom teachers in the process. Administrators play a critical role in the performance of students, but they only have the second greatest influence on student performance (Harris et al., 2017; Ismail et al., 2018; Marzano et al., 2005); classroom teachers have the most significant impact (Leithwood et al., 2004). P1 shared, "The first thing I do is share the data out, right, so I share the data with teachers and depending on the type of data I share with parents so that everyone understands where we are." T4 concurs, stating that the principal should provide feedback on varied methods of collecting data and specific strategies for how it can help improve instruction and, ultimately, student learning.



According to Wayman et al., (2012), school leaders can both enable or hinder data use. One way they hinder data use is the lack of their organization's capacity to use data effectively. The goal of data use is to understand how children learn and to increase academic achievement for all students; however, the analysis revealed that there are challenges that need addressing, so the data is effectively used to increase student achievement. Including these challenges gave voice to information shared by researchers and the literature review and created a complete picture of instructional leadership. One of the challenges that was identified was that a large amount of data is collected but not used efficiently to increase student achievement. P1 stated, "We do collect quite a bit of data, and the feedback I get from the staff is that we do a great job in collecting data, but we need to grow in utilizing that data and drilling deep into how we can create plans for success for kids." Furthermore, the data are available, but administrators need to effectively analyze and interpret the data to inform the needs of their schools. P2 added, "I think we need to do a reset as to what we are doing with the data." He elaborated that the data is "at our fingertips, but now we need to reset because it is going in and being a bit more intentional. Last, data conversations were not held regularly with teachers, so teachers were not reflecting and making sense of the data. P3 stated that initially, data conversation with her teachers felt like extra work; without knowing about the data, teachers felt like they were spinning their wheel. T1 noted that data conversations should be held "so that as changes are made, the reasons are clear."

The findings provided insight on the promotion of effective PD. The related literature in Chapter 2 indicated that PD is critical in enhancing teachers' ability to deliver

quality instruction to students, build their capacity, and improve student learning (Durksen et al., 2017; Kreider, 2017). Scholars assert that principals concerned about their school climate, the teacher's professional growth, student achievement, and the quality education the student receives will have a mindset related to PD or staff's continuous development (Sanchez, 2019; Terosky, 2016). The data reveals that principals in this study promoted a combination of district and on-site PD, which are presented in various ways. It was also revealed that some principals conducted the PD activities themselves; some are conducted by the PD director of the schools, while others merely encouraged teachers to attend workshops organized by the education department. Various Scholars support the practice of exposing teachers to PD (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018; Brown, 2019; DuFour & DuFour, 2013; Kreider, 2017; Smith, 2017). They maintain that teacher PD can spark the kind of change for teachers which ultimately creates positive student results and increase student achievement

The findings indicate that administrators use the analysis of school data, the school improvement plan, and data from questionnaires and surveys to drive the focus of the PD sessions. P1 referenced that he utilized his content area teacher leaders to determine PD needs for the schools and report what they used to determine PD needs. P2 states that for PD to be meaningful, he used varied data to drive this decision. These include the school goals, school improvement plan, accreditation report, and needs assessment. Koonce (2018) states that the instructional leader and the principal must act as a change agent, ensuring that the PD offered is based on best practices, research, and data analysis and should focus on setting goals and determining teachers' learning needs.

Although the administrators spoke so highly of PD, teachers opposed their information. Teachers contended that school administrations did not address their PD wants and needs. T5 complained, stating, "when it comes to PD like, where is the choice for your staff to say as a group what do we feel like we need to serve better the students that we have in front of us? The literature review mentioned that the PDs determined by school leadership is content-focused, passive, and traditional and lack the focus required to substantially impact student learning or change how teachers deliver their instruction (Brown, 2019; Smith, 2017).

The data also revealed that PD in this territory is delivered throughout the school year by different sources such as school administrators, department leaders, representatives from the Department of Education, school PD directors, the teacher unions, and from accredited online platforms. Participants also voiced that PDs are offered regularly. This was confirmed by T2, T3, T4, and T10. They posit that PDs are offered monthly and at least two days during a mid-term break. However, while teaching participants recognized the additional opportunities relevant to PD, they believed that PD must be a holistic approach, personalized, and relevant to the content of their needs. T8 concurred that some of the information shared during PD sessions are irrelevant, especially since non-faculty members are also present. She suggested that if the PDs were more tailored to their needs, everyone would remain interested. This conclusion was accentuated during the unanticipated COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in an initial shift to remote PD. Teachers reported experiences of disconnect because of the type of PD offered, how they are offered, how participants respond during sessions and the level

of participation. T5 revealed that during the pandemic, most PD could not be offered as a whole group or face to face but were offered remotely, which changed participants' responses and persons were less likely to participate because they were not in the space to do so. T2 and T3 added that PDs focused changed to facilitate issues relating to COVID-19, different platforms teachers can adopt in their virtual classrooms, coping strategies, and "Grace before Grades."

Researchers contend that the best PD sessions are designed to respond to a specific school need, facilitate what to do in actual classroom practice, and reduce the learning gap (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018; Patton et al., 2015). The findings confirmed researcher Patton et al., (2015) conclusion that effective PD is dependent on teacher needs and interests, content focused, connected to the classroom, ongoing and sustained, teachers, are active learners and focus on improving students' learning outcomes.

### ***Maintenance of Visibility***

Maintaining visibility is another practice highlighted by participants that instructional leaders need to implement to increase student achievement. The findings of this research support earlier research that maintaining high visibility continued to be a significant predictor of student achievement (Green, 2017; Vinitwatanakhun & Sawatsupaphon, 2019). During the interviews, teachers responded to the question that asked them to tell how their school administrators spend most of their day. This question supports the notion that visibility is one practice mentioned in the instructional leadership conceptual framework proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) that directly shapes the

desired behavior of teachers and students and creates a positive school climate. T2, T3, T6, T9, and T10 commented positively about the visibility of their school administrators. T3 and T9 both commented that students see the principals entering the school buildings in the morning and during lunch. T6 states that her principal sits amongst students during lunch daily. The school principals are also visible during observations and monitoring of instruction (T3, T6, T10), stemming disciplinary problems (T2, T10), visiting year-level assemblies, and giving speeches (T2). Maintaining high visibility helps with the culture and climate of the schools. A principal's visibility on the school campus indicates that they place interaction with students and faculty high on their priorities, which can positively affect school management, teacher pedagogy, and student achievement. When principals are visible, they become the role model for the norms, values, and vision needed to develop the school's culture (Green, 2017). A highly visible principal will have more opportunities to interact with teachers and students (Hallinger, 2013b).

To achieve administrators' perspectives about their visibility, they responded to the question by describing their direct involvement in teachers' classrooms over the last two years. All principals agreed they are visible when visiting classrooms, conducting walkthroughs, and when sitting and interacting with students. P5 states she visits classes at least twice per week and provides feedback by the end of the day. P3 responded that her visibility is every day and is through class observations, co-teaching, or sitting with students. Although all principals state that they are visible, the data revealed that this practice needs improvement in this British Territory as some teachers disagreed that principals were visible. T4 posits that she is unsure, but she believes that most of the day

is spent in the main office &/or in meetings with other administrative team members or Department of Education members." T5 stated, "I don't know. I don't see her. She stays in the office." This comment from T5 accentuates the point made by researchers that there is a disconnect between the desire to be an instructional leader, how time is spent, and the activities that dominate a principal's workday (Huang et al., 2020; Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Oplatka, 2017).

The findings also revealed that several factors within a school hinder the principals' desire to be more visible. One such barrier is time. Hallinger and Murphy (2013) found that time was a distinct barrier for principals in terms of being visible on campus and displaying instructional leadership practices. Having enough time during the school day to be visible on the school campus is a dilemma facing all principals in the study. P1 and P4 confirmed that time management and better utilization of time are factors. P1 mentioned that to prioritize activities, he has to ask himself if he should get something done now or if he can wait. He further postulates, "I like to get things sort of done, but then I reflect on my day and wonder, could I have done that after school and go into a classroom?" P4 stated, "I think again, time is always a factor. If we just had an endless amount of time that was not tied up in administrative tasks, certainly focusing on instructional practices looking at lesson planning and being able to support teachers in their data collection and then their use of that data effectively." Another factor discovered from the data was that the school level could determine the impact of instructional leadership and visibility. This conclusion supports researchers Firestone and Herriott (1982), who state that primary and secondary school instructional leaders differ in

instructional leadership and visibility. P3 commented that visibility for her was constant because she governs a small school. Furthermore, P4 state that at the senior level, principals devote more time to non-instructional responsibilities and are more visible because they have the assistance of deputy principals and department leaders.

Additionally, the dual role of some principals at the primary level school presents a challenge impacting their visibility as indicated in the qualitative responses of primary school principals. P4 states “in my role as a principal at the primary level going into the classroom has been limited because I actually have a class.” It is the expectation that all principals demonstrate instructional leadership practices (Hallinger et al., 2015) and keep pace with education reform, and shift between the roles and responsibilities of the school administrator and instructional leadership (Hallinger et al., 2015; Harris et al., 2017; Heaven & Bourne, 2016). It was expressed that some principals at the primary level are expected to teach and carry out the same administrative and instructional roles and responsibilities as any other principal. The combination of all these roles for one person is not an easy undertaking and would mean that there will not be enough time to devote to instructional leadership and being visible; thus, student achievement can be negatively impacted. P3, also a teaching instructional leader, postulates that this is her third year in the position, and it has been a struggle to balance her role, responsibilities, and decisions in the school building. She further noted that the problem of being the principal and a classroom teacher is exacerbated further because there are no other assigned leaders in the building to provide insights and help with the challenges that arise. She cannot distribute leadership, share the load and use the expertise of others. The principal's

visibility is connected to the effective management of the school, teacher pedagogy, and student achievement. Visible principals can work on unique culture and values within their school, gain opportunities to promote priorities, and engage in personal relationships across their school campus to have a lasting, positive effect on students' and teachers' attitudes and behaviors and the school climate (Grady, 1990; Phillips, 2015; The Breakthrough Coach, 2021).

### ***Teacher Incentives and Motivation***

Providing incentives for teachers to motivate them is an essential instructional leadership practice and one that creates a positive learning climate (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985). The following questions are mentioned in the literature review: What motivates a teacher to work hard? What kinds of incentives are offered to teachers for their hard work? These questions were answered when principals were asked to describe the strategies they use to motivate teachers in their schools, and teachers were asked what motivates them as a teacher. The data indicates that one instructional leadership practice that principals can use to increase students' achievement is providing incentives to reward good performance by the teachers. Researchers posit that teacher incentives come in the forms of honor and awards, public recognition, feedback, sincere compliments, and consistency. Additionally, principals motivate teachers by having an empathetic ear, supporting collaboration and PD opportunities, requesting teachers' opinions, paying attention to teachers' concerns, finding solutions to teacher issues, and providing time for



teachers to collaborate and de-stress (Blasé & Blasé,2000 in Phillips, 2015; Hallinger and Murphy,1985).

The findings from the data analysis revealed that all principals use different intrinsic and extrinsic ways to motivate teachers. P1claims he uses extrinsic rewards, free grub day, breakfast, cupcakes and treats. He further states “we celebrate everything. I think that family atmosphere makes everyone's lives a little bit easier on staff.” P2 uses dress-down Fridays, have giveaways or recognition breakfast. P3 comments “There's not one big thing I find ways to praise teachers.” He uses Fab Five on every Friday, giving praises and having personal connection with teachers. P5 indicates she motivates teachers through weekly newsletters, positive feedback; rigorous dialogue, baked goods, complimentary lunches, snacks during staff meetings, and the ultimate- Staff Appreciation Week. The principal role is pivotal role in setting up work structures that reward and recognize teachers for their efforts and inspire them (Geleta & Ababa, 2015; Hallinger et al., 2015). Therefore, if teachers must attain the highest performance standards it is necessary that principals be cognizant of the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Kumar (2019) and Sivertson (2018) attested that either intrinsic or extrinsic or even both can lead to high motivation levels and contribute to job satisfaction and high levels of performance. Although research has proven that both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives can lead to the motivation of teachers, the analysis of data from the interviews conducted revealed that teachers were mainly self-motivated or intrinsically motivated. T2 and T5 state that they are motivated when they can witness a change in students' behavior because learning has taken place, when learning transcends into good

grades and their students are progressing. T5 states “I get excited when I see them getting excited because they know that they've learned something.” T4 a senior school teacher of 8 years states she is motivated when her students become curious, focused and are eager to learn. When she receives positive feedback from students on classroom instruction/activities. When there are productive collaborative sessions with colleagues and team leaders; when leaders/administration ‘get in the trenches’ with teachers, provide timely support, recognize high-stress situations, and help to work through or alleviate stress.

In the literature review, Chapter 2 reiterates the importance of teachers being intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to influence student achievement positively. Alfonso (2018) posits that teachers' performance strengthens, their creativity and tenacity increase, and they are more emotionally stable when intrinsically motivated. Thompson et al., (2014) enunciate that intrinsic motivations provide the strongest energies that can maximize educational quality and outcomes and are crucial to success in the classroom. Extrinsically motivated teachers reported that they feel safe in the workplace, there is a relationship of respect and cooperation with other teachers and school leaders, and students are more willing to learn (Alfonso, 2018).

### **Theme 3: Challenges of Instructional Leadership**

Although Principals indicate that they extrinsically and intrinsically motivate teachers, the findings revealed that they faced many challenges that impact their teachers' motivation. The challenges principals faced were further exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition to remote teaching and the constant protocol changes have

increased the lack of teacher motivation, and administrators pondering how to keep their teachers motivated. P2 states that motivating teachers during this time became a challenge because he had to balance being in a pandemic and ensuring that teachers delivered instruction. T8 added, "the motivation isn't there, at least not as much as before the pandemic; yeah, I think it has gone downhill.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although the study illuminated our understanding of instructional leadership in this British Territory, several limitations must be acknowledged. The researcher employing a basic qualitative research strategy means the study relied on data derived from opinions, feelings, experiences, and in-depth personal details (Clark & Vealé, 2018; Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). No research has been conducted on instructional leadership in this Territory, so there were no previous empirical studies from which this study drew knowledge. As a result, this research was exploratory and drew partly on western concepts of instructional leadership. This study also did not include teachers and administrators from private schools as the purpose is on instructional leadership's role in increasing student achievement in public schools. The sample size in this study was 16 participants, so it did not draw upon a large sample; consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to populations that vary from the sample used in this study. However, with small sample size, the researcher focused on the 'information power' that the given sample holds and acquired rich and thick data (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012; Malterud et al., 2016). Due to regulations and social distancing measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to conduct face-to-face interviews. I believe that I could have

gathered more information about the participants' mental states and behaviors if there had been in-person interviews. Also, participants would have expressed more of their experiences related to their instructional leadership practices.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on the study's limitations and strengths. The recommendations can also lay the groundwork for future research, improve the leadership structure and expand the instructional leadership knowledge base within the school district. The findings of this study suggest that all principals receive continued PD to ensure that they are knowledgeable of instructional leadership, the practices of instructional leadership, and how to balance the dual role of managing the school environment and conducting their instructional leadership duties. Therefore, it is incumbent on the Department of Education and the Ministry of Education to ensure that instructional leadership training takes place before hiring school administrators. This training will ensure that administrators are knowledgeable and confident when implementing instructional leadership.

It is also critical that principals be given support from minister of education, the department of education and within the schools so that they have the time to demonstrate the instructional leadership practices that will increase student achievement. With this time, school administrators could improve their leadership practices, such as communicating, supervising, and evaluating instruction, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, and maintaining high visibility. The time given will also improve the climate and culture of the school.

It is also recommended that a data-driven culture be initiated at both district and school levels. The findings revealed that the barriers to using data to increase student achievement are the lack of time to analyze and collaborate, the large amount of data collected but not used efficiently, and the lack of involvement of teachers in data conversations. One suggested solution to initiate the data-driven culture is establishing data teams at the district and school levels. This team will train others to analyze data effectively and present data and results during the district, school faculty, and department meetings. Implementing this team will also give principals time to collaborate with others and have the necessary assistance in managing and analyzing the large amount of data collected. Also, the school district needs to schedule time throughout the year for teachers to engage in PD that focuses on student data, interpreting results and developing solutions to problems discovered.

The study finds that teachers are concerned with how PD is offered and that PDs are not aligned to their needs. Another recommendation is that administrators, PD directors, and representatives from the department of education work together and become more aware of teachers' priorities, their needs, and the PD content. When all stakeholders collaborate, the strengths and weaknesses will be identified, PD will become more impactful, teachers will feel motivated, instructional time will be protected, and the school goals will be achieved.

The current study mainly focused on the public schools in this British Territory. This research scope could be broadened for future research by including other school types, as indicated by the study's limitations. This recommendation is because of the lack

of generalizability of the results to other contexts and settings. A broader investigation can expand the body of knowledge, assure unique perspectives and lead to opportunities for comparisons and discussions of findings. The perspectives may also likely influence policy on influential instructional leaders' responsibilities and may also influence the training of principals as instructional leaders to focus specifically on the specific leadership behaviors addressed in the PIMRS to ensure school success and quality student performance.

Replicate this study using quantitative methodology. A quantitative study to determine if there is a relationship between the instructional leadership practices, as measured by the PIMRS, and student achievement. In addition, which relationship is most significant? Also, replicate the study to include private school teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership behaviors relating to student achievement. Finally, the information from this study should be shared with all school principals and professional organizations interested in principal leadership and how it affects student achievement.

### **Implications**

The study's purpose was to explore instructional leadership's role in increasing student achievement in public schools in a British Territory. This research has built on existing scholarly research. It may have several implications for social change in society, the education sector, the school district, and all stakeholders within a school by applying the findings and making a difference. The expectation in this British territory is that schools become institutions that graduate productive citizens, so all stakeholders must become social change agents and find the answers that lead in the direction of excellence.

Without positive social change, not only will public schools continue to see a decline in education outcomes, but there will be invariable damage to society (McLaren, 2017). The confidence in public education needs renewing, and stimulating this confidence will require instructional leaders who are strong, committed to district and school goals, and who can create a climate of trust, compassion, and high expectations.

This study has provided a better understanding of the practices administrators can implement to achieve the desired results for student achievement. Education is an instrument of change and one that a country can use for economic and societal development. However, the success of this British country depends on impactful instructional leaders, effective teaching and learning, and well-educated students. Consequently, this study has implications for positive social change, and the findings could help improve the practices.

As education continues to be transformed due to reforms and the worldwide pandemic, it is critical to support principals in their dual roles as managers and instructional leaders. The analysis supported the argument that instructional leadership remains one of the most critical leadership styles because of its impact on all aspects of education within an institution. However, the findings have shown that although instructional leadership is necessary to forge effective change, the administrator must put instructional leadership practices that enhance and support student outcomes.

To meet the challenges associated with instructional leadership, the involvement of the department of education, teachers, department leaders, and other stakeholders within the school is essential. The finding proposes that a collaborative structure

involving all who have a vested interest in students is needed for instructional leadership to work. All stakeholders need to work productively together to accomplish the school's goals.

An understanding of instructional leadership is necessary for effective school outcomes. Interviewing study participants revealed that each person has their definition of instructional leadership. From this study, it is plausible that the Department of Education, in collaboration with principals, develops a standard definition of the concept of instructional leadership. This common definition would create equity and standards related to instructional leadership and integrate them into future strategic plans.

The best PDs are those that bring about changes. Karacabey (2021) states that the instructional leader's attitudes and efforts towards PD can either increase or hinder teachers' motivation and opportunities. The discussion of the findings acknowledges that PD is not a "one-size-fits-all" approach and that teachers need to be provided with the time, knowledge, and PD that effectively meet their needs. When teachers' needs are met, their competencies increase, student outcomes will be supported, education will improve, and the country will be able to compete globally.

### **Conclusion**

Global policy pressures and the changing societal demands on our school system have increased principals' accountability. These accountability demands have placed pressure on school administrators and require them to take a second look at how their instructional practices contribute to school improvement. Through this study, it became clear that there remains an ambiguity surrounding instructional leadership and



that instructional leadership is context specific because the contexts in which administrators work to shape how they enact their leadership practices. At the same time, Hallinger and Murphy proposed three dimensions, categorized into ten leadership functions. The findings from the study revealed that in this British context, only certain instructional leadership practices were initiated and implemented by administrators. The first dimension- defining the school mission, which includes framing the school's goal and communicating the school goals- was not as evident in the analysis process. The leadership practices identified in the conceptual framework are all essential, so competence in each becomes critical to increase student achievement. Additionally, administrators' competence would help them respond effectively to education reform, develop strong teachers, close the achievement gap and see students leave school with the skills and knowledge necessary for their careers and lives. The need to prioritize instructional leadership practices is grounded in research that has validated the impact such leadership has on closing the achievement gap.

The role of administrators and the practice of instructional leadership is complex. This study's findings have raised further questions that need answers, such as: What school conditions support the practice of shared instructional leadership? Are teachers prepared to take on the role of instructional leaders? I look forward to seeing these questions addressed.

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## Appendix: Interview Protocol

### Initial Interview Protocol for Principals & Teachers

Hello, my name is Keyna Crawford Anderson, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I would first like to thank you for your willingness to be interviewed as part of my study about instructional leadership of administrators. With your permission, your responses will be audio recorded, but will remain confidential. You will be assigned a participant number and only I will know participant names and their corresponding responses. The results will be summarized in order to make general recommendations of effective instructional leadership practice. You have the option to skip any questions and/or stop the interview at any time. Your answers will be confidential and coded for anonymity. Do you have any questions?

### Questions

#### Background

1. Are you a primary, middle, or senior school principal/ teacher?
2. How many years have you been the Principal at your current School?
3. How many years have you been a teacher at your current School?

#### General Questions (Administrators)

1. How would you define instructional leadership?
2. Describe your personal leadership style.
3. What are the primary instructional goals for your school?
4. Describe how school goals are communicated to you and other stakeholders (students, staff, parents, community)?

5. Describe your direct involvement in teachers' classroom over the last 2 years?
6. How has your direct involvement in teachers' classrooms changed over the past two years?
7. How do you use data to monitor and improve student achievement?
8. Describe the strategies you use to motivate teachers in your school.
9. Describe for me how you determine professional development needs, and what the main areas of focus are for professional development.
10. What is your role in creating a school climate conducive for learning?
11. What aspects of instructional leadership do you think needs improvement in your school?

**General Questions (Teacher)**

1. How would you define instructional leadership?
2. How would you describe your administrator's leadership style?
3. How are the school goals communicated to you and other stakeholders (students, staff, parents, community)?
4. How have your teaching and leadership responsibilities changed over the last 2 years relative to instruction, progress monitoring and professional development?
5. To whom or what do you attribute these changes and why?
6. What role should the principal play regarding the use of data to guide instruction?
7. What motivates you as a teacher?
8. Tell me about professional development in your school including who provides it and how you are expected to use ideas from the professional development.

9. How does your principal spend the majority of his/her day?
10. What aspects of instructional leadership in your school do you think needs improvement?