

# THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ROLE OF PRINCIPALS IN DEVELOPING GOOD PRACTICES IN TEACHING & LEARNING PROCESS IN THE TAMIL MEDIUM SCHOOLS OF PUTTALAM DISTRICT IN SRI LANKA

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study was to evaluate perception of school principals towards their instructional leadership roles in developing good practices in the teaching & learning process. For achieving this purpose, following research questions were also included: (i) what are the perception of principals on their instructional leadership roles? (ii) What is the perception of teachers & other academic staff towards on the instructional leadership role of principals? (iii) what are the best practices developed by performing instructional leadership roles of principals in the teaching & learning process? (iv) What are the differences in the instructional leadership role of principals towards students' achievements based on their school types, qualifications, and experience? Population of the study was school principals and teachers from Tamil medium schools in Puttalam district in Sri Lanka. A mixed research method carried out with stratified probability sampling. 33 principals, 20 teachers and 10 academic officers were selected. Adopted Principal Instructional Manual Rating Scale (PIMRS) questionnaire was employed to collect data from principals and self-developed an interview schedule was used to collect data from teachers and academic officers. One way ANOVA and post-hoc methods were used for analyze the quantitative data. The results revealed that the principal of Puttalam district has a positive perception on their instructional leadership roles especially principals from 1C and Type 2 Schools were highly shown instructional leadership behavior and it was significantly related indirectly on students' achievement. However, they showed low level of perceptions on class supervision and monitoring the students' progress. The findings were suggested that the quality of instructional leadership roles of principals should be increased. and class supervision, monitoring students' progress and learning climate should be developed for the best instructional practices.

**Keywords:** Instructional Leadership, Perceptions, Teaching and Learning Process, Students' Achievements, Puttalam

## 1. INTRODUCTION

School leaders and educational administrators are constantly seeking ways to improve their schools and their students' academic success. there are numerous factors which affect students' academic success, such as socioeconomic status (Barton, 2004), parental involvement (Barnard, 2004), principal leadership style (Blase & Blase, 2000; Hallinger, 2003), teacher and student engagement (Bryson & Hand, 2007) and method of instruction (Miller & Calfee, 2004). According to Lozette (2001) clear school mission, high expectations for success, instructional leadership, opportunity to learn and time on task, safe and orderly environment, positive home-school relations, frequent monitoring of student progress are some of characteristics of an effective school. These factors impact on schools' teaching & learning process and student's achievements. Jaufar (2001) also found that the teacher engagement, motivation for learning and instructional leadership of principals are significantly correlates with students' academic achievements. Therefore, the instructional leadership role of principals was seen in these

studies as significant factor for developing effective schools and improving the students' achievement.

In the era of accountability, schools principals are playing very important role in the school instructions. The primary responsibility of the principal is to facilitate effective learning and teaching with the overall mission of enhancing students' achievements. Leadership is a central variable in the equation that defines organizational success (Murphy, et al., 2007). Therefore, principals needed to serve as instructional leaders in school teaching and learning process for school success. Principals are responsible for classroom teaching & learning process. They are expected to lead to teaching and learning process. Principal is the leader of the school therefore he/she must be prepared to give the proper leadership. Principal must be very high standards in work and behavior. With his encouragement, the rest of the school will follow where he/she leads. In the 1980s, "instructional leadership" term introduced in effective schools' movement of the 1970s and 1980s (Edmon, 1979; Hornig & Loef 2010) and it became very important topic in the educational field. Moreover, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2001) defines instructional leadership as leading learning communities, in which staff members meet on a regular basis to discuss their work, collaborate to solve problems, reflect on their jobs, and take responsibility for what students learn. So, the leadership which leads to learning is considered as instructional leadership. In the Sri Lankan context, the theme of instructional leadership is in critical condition. Principal plays traditional managerial role. Even though instructional leadership concept was introduced in 1980's, Sri Lankan school system not adopted the instructional leadership.

Traditional education system of the country had started to change since colonial period. There was colonial rule for more than 300 years in the country. Western education though started to flow into the country when the Portuguese captured the country in 1505 followed by the Dutch (1656) and British (1796) till 1948 (Nawastheen 2015). School Principals were called as Head Masters and they managed the school and academic functions of schools when Colebrook Commission introduced British School system in 1836. After the independence, Head Master called as school principal (Sasheeka, 2012). Nowadays, the role of principal has been transformed through the Program on school Improvement (PSI). Principal is responsible for school performance and student learning outcomes. To produce best school performance and quality of learning outcomes, principals are needed to play Instructional leadership role. There are number of studies on Instructional leadership in other countries. But, there is a lack of studies on instructional leaderships role of school principals. Lekamge (2010), found that much of the Sri Lankan school principals focused on the traditional management and administration roles. They did not give priority to perform the instructional leadership. But, they focus on transactional leadership role by planning and organization of school, management of curriculum, managing staff, students, and resources (Lekamge 2010). Sasheeka (2012) found that the Sri Lankan school principals of selected schools were aware about academic leadership, but still playing managerial role. They failed to understand and differentiate their functions as a leader from a managerial administrator. Sumith (2012) found that the principals from Galle schools were spending their most of time on preparing budgets and managerial activities. Jayamaha (2012) also found that lack of teacher development and supervision of the teaching- learning process paved the

way to teaching methods were unsatisfactory level with lack of preparation and lesson planning among the school principals from Kurunagala district. According the literature, there is no studies found related to the role of school principal in Instructional Leadership in Puttalam district. Puttalam district is in the North-Western province along with Kurunegala in Sri Lanka. There are around 339 schools in which 256 Sinhala medium and 68 Tamil medium schools. There are 23 1AB schools, 71 IC schools, 202 Type2 schools and 46 Type 3 schools in the district (MOE, 2014). Therefore, it is important to evaluate Instructional Leadership role of school principals in developing good practices in the classroom teaching and learning process.

## 1.1 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate perception of school principals towards their instructional leadership roles in developing good practices in the teaching & learning process. For achieving this purpose, following research questions were also included: (i) what are the perception of principals on their instructional leadership roles? (ii) what is the perception of teachers & other academic staff towards on the instructional leadership role of principals? (iii) what are the best practices developed by performing instructional leadership roles of principals in the teaching & learning process? (iv) what are the differences in the instructional leadership role of principals towards students' achievements based on their school types, qualifications, and experience?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A mixed research method design was employed in this study. Stratified probability sampling was used in the study. Total of 33 principals (1AB - 3, 1C - 13, Type 2 - 10, Type 3 - 7), 20 teachers and 10 academic officers were selected as sample from Tamil medium schools of Puttalam educational zone. Teachers and academic officers were selected to find out the perception of the instructional leadership of principal. Principal Instructional Manual Rating Scale (PIMRS) questionnaire was a main instrument of data collection from principals. The PIMRS questionnaire consists two parts. The school type, professional qualifications and experience were taken as independent variables. Respondents' demographic information was collected from the Part I of the instrument. There were 50 items on Instructional Leadership behavior with 1 - 5 Likert rating scale in the Part II of the instrument. Several models of instructional leadership were proposed during the 1980s. Researchers employed a model proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) since it is the model that has been used most frequently in many empirical investigations. This model proposes three dimensions for the instructional leadership role of the principal: *Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate*. These three dimensions are further delineated into 10 instructional leadership functions: *frame the school goals, communicate the school goals, supervise, and evaluate instruction, coordinate the curriculum, monitor student progress, protect instructional time, maintain high visibility, provide incentives for teachers, promote professional development and provide incentives for learning*. The study carried out with the mediated effects model. The leadership as a driver for school effectiveness and improvement. This model assumes that changes in leadership and capacity for improvement which take place at the school

level produce ‘trickle down’ effects on teaching and learning process. A self-developed an interview schedule was also used to collect data from teachers and academic officers to identify the perceptions of the instructional leadership role of school principals. Data analysis methods carried out according to the research objectives. Content Analysis method was used to analysis the interview data. One way ANOVA and post hoc methods were used for analyze the quantitative data with SPSS. Grade 5 and G.C.E. O/L School performance analysis reports of 2013 by Puttalam zonal educational office were used for clarify and identify the performing schools.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study focused on Instructional Leadership role of Principals in Developing good practices in the Teaching and learning process. The findings are presented in line with the four research questions.

#### 3.1 RQ1: What are the perception of principals on their instructional leadership roles?

For answering RQ1, data were collected from 33 school principals on following 10 categories of instructional leadership role: *Frame the School Goals, Communicate the School Goals, Supervise and Evaluate Instruction, Coordinate the Curriculum, Monitor Student Progress, Protect Instructional Time, Maintain, High Visibility, Provide Incentives for Teachers, Promote Professional Development, Provide Incentives for Learning.*

*Table 1: Perceptions of Principals on their Instructional Leadership role*

<b>Instructional leadership functions</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Frame the School Goals	33	4.0485	.50008
Communicate the School Goals	33	4.1515	.43883
Supervise and Evaluate Instruction	33	3.8485	.54551
Coordinate the Curriculum	33	3.9576	.48414
Monitor Student Progress	33	4.1818	.45652
Protect Instructional Time	33	3.9697	.48250
Maintain High Visibility	33	4.0303	.55254
Provide Incentives for Teachers	33	4.0606	.52318
Promote Professional Development	33	4.3636	.50610
Provide Incentives for Learning	33	4.6000	.45552

Principals responded to Provide Incentives for Learning was very high level. Table 1 shows mean and standard deviation of perceptions of Principals on their Instructional Leadership role in the schools. Overall results of the analysis showed that principals

perceived their instructional leadership roles at high level except in the categories of *Supervise & Evaluate Instruction, Coordinate the Curriculum, and Protect Instructional Time*. The score at *Provide Incentives for Learning* (M=4.6, Sd=.45) clearly shows that principals were highly participating for motivate the students. They recognized students' works with formal rewards, use assemblies to honor students for academic accomplishments, recognize superior student achievement, contact parents to communicate improved student performance and support teachers actively in their recognition in class.

According results of analyzed data, second high scored found at *promote professional development of teachers* (M=4.3, Sd=.50). It clearly shows that school Principals actively participated in the professional development of teachers. They ensured that teachers involve in the in-service activities, actively support the use in the classroom of skills acquired during in-service training, lead or attend teacher in-service activities concerned with instruction and set aside time at staff meetings for teachers to share ideas or information from in-service activities. Further, the score at the *frame the school goals* (M=4.0, Sd=.5), *communicate the school goals* (M=4.1, Sd=4.3), *monitor student progress* (M=4.1, Sd=.45), *maintain high visibility* (M=4.0, Sd=.55) and *provide incentives for teachers* (M=4.0, Sd=.52) are also at high which demonstrate that the principals of Puttalam district were also participating in these aspects of instructional leadership role positively. They involve in school goal setting annually with staff and communicate the goals to the school community. And they monitor students' progress by meeting individually with teachers. They discuss about student progress and academic performance results. Meanwhile they use tests and other performance measure to assess progress toward school goals. They maintain high visibility on school achievements. They talk informally with students and teachers, visit classrooms, participate in extra- and co-curricular activities, cover classes for teachers and provide direct instruction to classes. And they motivate the teachers for best school performance by providing Instructional Leadership. Reinforcements are given regularly for teachers' superior performance and compliment teachers privately for their efforts or performance. Teachers are rewarded for special contributions to the school. Scores at the categories of *Supervise and evaluate instruction* (M=3.8, Sd=.54), *coordinate the curriculum* (M=3.9, Sd=.48) and *protect instructional time* (M=3.9, Sd=.48) are seems at average level. According to their rating these behaviors were low level. Class room supervision and instructional evaluations are main keys in school success. They rarely conduct formal supervision in the classrooms and point out specific strengths and weaknesses in teacher's instructional practices and send feedback rarely. And sharing responsibility to staff and limiting interruptions of instructional time are seems below average level. Even though there are some shortcomings have seen on the principals' instructional behavior, the results show that principals actively participate on instructional leadership and express their perception as positive.

### **3.2 RQ2: What is the perception of teachers & other academic staff towards on the instructional leadership role of principals?**

Perceptions of teachers and academic staff on instructional leadership is important as well as principals. Principals rated their perceptions themselves. The self-developed interview schedule was included the dimension of instructional leadership. These questions were

used to clarify the principals' answers. Teachers and academic staff of Puttalam educational zone were expressed their verdict on principals' instructional behavior in the school. The interview with teachers and academic staff said that 60% of principals setting annual school wide goals and communicate the goals to the school community. They set the goals to improve grade five scholarship, G.C.E. O/L and G.C.E. A/L results. They got staff inputs by individually meeting them or staff meeting and use past achievements data for the goal setting process. Then they communicate the school goals to students, teachers, and parents. Unfortunately, 50% of them failed to achieve the goals. Curricular duties and responsibilities were given to the deputy principals, sectional heads, and teachers. But 50 % of them not supervised whether the duties and responsibilities were accomplished or not. No proper internal supervision carried out any schools. They just followed the circular orders and sending reports to the zonal education office. Increased work load, insufficient or not having management assistant and incredible teacher leaves prevented them from internal supervision. There were around 50% of principals contact internal supervision by their self or internal supervision group and sometimes they send feedbacks to the teachers while others didn't. From the study, there were 60% of principals have given priorities to the class room learning, teaching and school based assessments. They monitored the students' progress continuously. They used exam marks and SBA marks and analysis the progress and discuss students' progress with students, teachers, and parents. The study revealed that 50% of principals created the learning climate. They organized class rooms, decorate, and provide resources to the learning and teaching. They limited with the interruptions of extracurricular activities and avoided calling students to office during the instructional time. And they ensured that students not to miss any periods and encouraged teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts. The study further revealed that the teachers faced a number of problems within the school community. In order to solve their problems, they needed to seek the help of their principal. Unfortunately, most of the principals were not interested to involve or provide assistants to them. Though some of them responded to teachers, majority of teachers were not satisfied with the response shown by the principal in order to solve their problems. The results revealed that 80% of the principals were interested to promote teacher professional development. They ensured the teachers participation on in service trainings in order to get the professional development. And they promoted teachers for success. They reinforced superior performance by teachers in staff meetings, complimented teachers privately for their efforts or performances, acknowledged teachers' exceptional performances and rewarded to their special efforts. Likewise, all the principals of Puttalam district actively participated to promoted the students learning and rewarded them for the success. Students were rewarded during assemblies or prize giving ceremony for their academic accomplishments. Overall results showed that teachers and other staff perceived positively on their school principals' instructional leadership role.

### **3.3 RQ3: What are the best practices developed by performing instructional leadership role of principals in the teaching & learning process?**

School principals and academic officers were interviewed to find out best practices in teaching & learning developed by performing instructional leadership role of principals. Overall results showed that principals from Tamil medium schools performed good level of instructional leadership role thus good practices were also developed in the teaching

& learning process. Motivating students towards successful learning, rewarding students in the morning assemblies, encouraging teachers involving in professional development programmes and allowing teachers to participate in the in-service training programs were some of the best practices of principals. Moreover, it was revealed that Principals always concerned on instructions and set aside time at staff meetings for teachers for sharing ideas. Likewise, Principals motivated teachers through his/her instructional behaviors. Principals rewarded good performance of teachers in the staff meetings. Such good practices would facilitate for an effective classroom teaching & learning process.

**3.4 RQ4: What are the differences in the instructional leadership role of principals towards students’ achievements based on their school types, qualifications, and experience?**

For answering RQ3, Principals’ perception towards students’ achievements through their instructional leadership role were analyzed based on three factors such as principals’ school types, qualifications, and experience. Organizational factor and personal factors are affect the instructional leadership behaviors. One way ANOVA and post hoc methods were used for analyzing the factors affecting on the instructional leadership behaviors and students’ achievement. One way ANOVA was used to find out statically significant differences between group and within group factors. If the p value is greater than 0.05 considered as statistically significant. If statistically significant value found the post hoc Tukey HSD tests were used to which condition means are different.

**3.4.1 School type and instructional leadership**

A one-way ANOVA was contacted to compare the effect of type of schools on instructional Leadership behavior based on their school types (1AB, 1C, Type 2 and Type 3 schools). Table 2 shows the overall results of the analysis. There was a statistically significant difference among school types on instructional Leadership behavior [F (3, 29) = 2.94, p= 0.04].

*Table 2: School type and Instructional Leadership Behavior (posthoc)*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.942	3	.314	2.948	.049
Within Groups	3.090	29	.107		
Total	4.032	32			

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the mean score for the 1C (M = 4.33, SD = 0.35) and Type2 (M = 4.23, SD = 0.31) schools were significantly different than the 1AB (M = 3.86, SD = 0.15) and Type 3 (M = 3.96, SD = 0.33). However, the 1AB schools (M = 3.86, SD = 0.15) did not significantly differ from the Type 3 schools. (See table 3). Overall, these results suggested that the type of schools is effect the principal Instructional leadership behaviors. Specifically, 1C and Type 2 schools’ principals expressed high level leadership behavior and actively provided instructional leadership roles to develop classroom learning and teaching.

Table 3: Post hoc comparison on School type and Instructional Leadership Behaviour

School Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1AB	3	3.8667	.15275	.08819	3.4872	4.2461	3.70	4.00
1C	13	4.3315	.35419	.09823	4.1175	4.5456	3.69	4.82
Type 2	10	4.2330	.31263	.09886	4.0094	4.4566	3.77	4.80
Type 3	7	3.9657	.33125	.12520	3.6594	4.2721	3.71	4.60
Total	33	4.1818	.35499	.06180	4.0559	4.3077	3.69	4.82

### 3.4.2 Professional qualifications and instructional leadership

For analyzing collected data based on principals' professional qualifications, one way ANOVA was executed (See table 4). There was no statistically significant different between professional qualifications of school principals on instructional Leadership behavior at the  $p < 0.05$  level for the School type [ $F(3, 29) = .474, p = 0.703$ ]

Table 4: Professional qualifications and Instructional Leadership Behaviour

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.188	3	.063	.474	.703
Within Groups	3.844	29	.133		
Total	4.032	32			

These results suggest that the professional qualifications were not effect on instructional Leadership behaviors of school principals. The differences between professional qualifications of school principals' means were likely due to chance and not likely due to the manipulation.

### 3.4.3 Experience of the principals and instructional leadership

A one-way ANOVA was executed to compare the effect of experience of the principals on instructional Leadership behavior. There was a statistically significant effect of experience on instructional Leadership behavior at the  $p < 0.05$  level for the School type [ $F(3, 29) = 3.99, p = 0.018$  (See table 5)]



*Table 5: experience of the principals and Instructional Leadership Behaviour*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.172	3	.391	3.961	.018
Within Groups	2.860	29	.099		
Total	4.032	32			

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test table above explains that the mean score for the principals' years of experience 16-20 ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 0.11$ ) was significantly different than the principals' years of experience 11-15 ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 0.33$ ), principals' years of experience 6-10 ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = 0.39$ ) and principals' years of experience 1-5 ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 0.24$ ). However, the principals' years of experience 11-15 ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 0.33$ ) and principals' years of experience 6-10 ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = 0.39$ ) significantly differ from the principals' years of experience 1-5 ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 0.24$ ). These results suggested that the principals' years of experience is effect the principal Instructional leadership behaviors. Specifically increasing experience directly correlated to the incensement on instructional leadership behavior. According to the Grade 5 and G.C.E. O/L School performance analysis report 2013 provided by Puttalam zonal educational office the 1 C and Type 2 schools are producing best results. The 1C and Type 2 schools are achieved up to 50- 100% pass rate in G.C.E. O/L and grade 5 scholarship exams reached to 33% of qualified candidates. The students' achievements were effected through mediation of principals' instructional leadership behavior on class room teaching and learning process. Principals indirectly influence on students' achievements by leading to learning and teaching.

*Table 6: Post hoc comparison on School type and Instructional Leadership Behaviour*

Experience in Years	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1-5	9	3.9822	.24570	.08190	3.7934	4.1711	3.77	4.40
6-10	7	4.1714	.39902	.15081	3.8024	4.5405	3.71	4.82
11-15	13	4.1869	.33930	.09410	3.9819	4.3920	3.69	4.73
16-20	4	4.6325	.11644	.05822	4.4472	4.8178	4.53	4.80
Total	33	4.1818	.35499	.06180	4.0559	4.3077	3.69	4.82

They develop class room teaching providing incentives for learning, teacher motivation and teacher professional development. Effective teaching and principals' motivation for students' learning were made these schools' success. The type of school and service experience of the principals are shaping the instructional leadership of the school principals. Successful school leadership creates conditions that support effective teaching and learning and builds capacity

for professional learning and change (Fullan, 2002). Therefore, we can conclude 15-20 years experienced 1C and Type2 schools' principals were actively providing instructional leadership role on classroom teaching and learning process and influence indirectly on students' achievements.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

The following suggestions are made in order to improve the instructional leadership.

- Learning should be given top priority while everything else revolves around the enhancement of learning. Instructional leaders need to know what is going on in the classroom.
- They should pay attention not only for government general exams but also all the classes in the school.
- Principals should create positive learning climate and ensure students learning limiting interruption.
- Students' progress should be monitored on regular basis and an action plan should be created to monitor the students by individual or classed vice.
- Principals should allocate their time to participate in class room learning and teaching. They needed to know what is going on in the class room.
- Principals workloads should be decreased appointing management assistants and office assistants.
- The quality of supervision is need to be increased and proper feedbacks should be given to the teachers to shape up teaching and learning process. Special attention should be given on internal and external supervision by the zonal educational officers
- Professional development programmes should be conducted on instructional leadership and special attention should be given to develop class room teaching and learning process.
- Proper salary should be given to the principals and uplifted their life standard. They should not involve with business or other carrier activities. They should spend their time in schools.

The main contribution of this study was to provide the proposals to develop the instructional leadership role of the school principals. Analysis of the overall results have shown that the 60% of school principals' perceptions on instructional leadership was positive. They actively participate in motivate the students and promote professional development of teachers. However internal supervision and monitoring students' progress were below average level. As said top leadership can affect high performance in the organizations they lead by their own commitment (Lorraine, 2012) the 15-20 years experienced 1C and Type 2 schools' principals were actively providing instructional leadership on class room teaching and learning process and influence indirectly on students' achievements. This study was carried out with Hallingers Instructional leadership models. there are so many leadership models to school leaders. such as Sergiovanni's (1984) transactional leadership and Chengs' (1994) Leadership models may be used in future studies. As this study was limited with Puttalam district, the future studies may be carried out national level.

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