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Instructional Leadership and the School Principal: A Passing Fancy that Refuses to Fade Away

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One lasting legacy of the effective schools movement was the institutionalization of the term “instructional leadership” into the vocabulary of educational administration. Evidence from other recent reviews of the literature on principal leadership (e.g., Hallinger, 2001; Hallinger & Heck 1996; Southworth, 2002) suggest that twenty years later, the instructional leadership construct is still alive in the domains of policy, research, and practice in school leadership and management. Indeed, since the turn of the twenty-first century, the increasing global emphasis on accountability seems to have reignited interest in instructional leadership.

This paper ties together evidence drawn from several extensive reviews of the educational leadership literature that included instructional leadership as a key construct (Hallinger, 2001, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Southworth, 2002). The paper will seek to define the core characteristics underlying this approach to school leadership and management based upon both conceptual developments and empirical investigation. The review will identify the defining characteristics of instructional leadership as it has evolved, elaborate on the predominant model in use for studying instructional leadership, and report the empirical evidence about its effects. Finally, the paper will reflect on the relationship between this model and the evolving educational context in which it is exercised and how this is reshaping our perspective on instructional leadership.

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The school principal has always been expected to perform a variety of roles. For example, Cuban (1988) identified the political, managerial, and instructional roles as fundamental to the principalship. He further concluded that principal effectiveness is attained by finding the correct balance among these roles for a given school context. 35

Cuban's analysis of the principalship occurred during an era in which there had been growing interest in the instructional leadership role of school principals. This interest was stimulated initially by findings from research conducted during the 1970s and 1980s on instructionally effective schools. During the 1980s there had led to a boom in the start-up of "leadership academies" devoted to leadership development for school principals. 40

The focus on leadership development in schools was the result of external policy reforms aimed at driving school improvement forward by changing the practice of school leaders (Barth, 1986; Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992). The main curricular focus in these academies was the effective schools model, which typically included major strands on instructional leadership (Grier, 1987; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992; Marsh, 1992). Although this development suggested that instructional leadership was becoming more firmly rooted in the role of school administrators, it was still too soon to determine the longer term outcome. Would the attempts at reform bear fruit or would the new shoots shrivel on the vine? 50

At the turn of the century, the American infatuation with performance standards has become a global love affair (Leithwood, 2003; Murphy, 2002; Murphy & Shipman, 2003). Principals again find themselves at the nexus of accountability and school improvement with an increasingly explicit expectation that they will function as "instructional leaders." Given the passage of formal government standards for education through the world, principals who ignore their role in monitoring and improving school performance do so at their own risk (Bolam, 2003, 2001; Heck, personal communication, 2003; Jackson, 2000; Lam, 2003; Leithwood, 2003; Tomlinson, 2003). 60

This is also reflected in the emergence of a new global wave of principal preparation and development programs spawned during the late 1990s. Recent analyses have found a distinct programmatic emphasis on ensuring that principals are able to fulfill their *instructional leadership* role (Hallinger, 2003; Huber, 2003). Preparation for this particular role has been explicitly linked to training curricula in government-led efforts in the United States (Gewirtz, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Murphy, 2002; Murphy & Shipman, 2003; Stricherz, 2001a, 2001b), the United Kingdom (Bolam, 2003; Southworth, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003), Singapore (Chong, Stott, & Low, 2003), Hong Kong (Lam, 2003), and Australia (Caldwell, 2003; Davis, 2003). As often as not, however, even the program developers are left 75

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wondering, “just what should we be preparing principals to do as instructional leaders?”¹

The purpose of this paper is to address this query. The paper seeks to assess development of the instructional leadership role of the school principal over the past twenty-five years. More specifically the paper seeks to identify 80 what we have learned about this role from theoretical developments, empirical studies, and practice.

THE PRINCIPAL'S INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ROLE IN EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

A retrospective assessment of instructional leadership yields some general 85 observations about how scholars have conceived of this role in the period since 1980. First, with its emergence out of the research on “instructionally effective elementary schools” (e.g., Edmonds, 1979), instructional leadership was conceived as a *role carried out by the school principal* (Bossert et al., 1982; Dwyer 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Glasman, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 90 1985a; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). During the 1980's relatively little reference was made to teachers, department heads, or even to assistant principals as instructional leaders. There was little discussion of instructional leadership as a distributed characteristic or function to be shared.

It was widely disseminated during the 1980's that principals in instructional 95 effectively schools exercised strong instructional leadership; ergo policymakers in the USA took steps to “encourage” all principals to assume this role in order to make their own schools more effective (Barth, 1986; Cuban, 1984, 1988; Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992). While critics identified the holes in this logic (e.g., Barth, 1986), as well as the limitations of the underlying 100 research (Bossert et al., 1982; Cuban, 1984), in the United States instructional leadership became strongly identified as a normatively desirable role that principals who wished to be effective should fulfill.

Instructional leaders were described as *strong, directive leaders* who had been successful at “turning their schools around” (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; 105 Bossert et al., 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a, 1985b, 1986). There were relatively few descriptions of effective instructional leaders working in typical schools. Yet schools differ widely in terms of their needs and resources, as well as in the type of leadership required to move them forward.

Instructional leaders were viewed as *culture builders*. They sought to 110 create an “academic press” that fostered high expectations and standards for students, as well as for teachers (Barth, 1990, 2002; Bossert et al., 1982; 10

¹ This query has been raised with me by program developers in Australia, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, and England.

Mortimore, 1993; Glasman, 1984; Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a, 1985b, 1986; Heck et al., 1990; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Notably, instructional leaders were viewed as a minority of principals who somehow managed to overcome the multiple pressures that push principals away from curriculum, instruction, and the classroom. 115

Instructional leaders were *goal-oriented*. As leaders they were able to define a clear direction for the school and motivate others to join in its achievement. In instructionally effective schools, this direction focused primarily on the improvement of *student academic outcomes* (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Glasman, 1984; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1990; Leitner, 1994; O'Day, 1983). Vision, goals, and mission became strongly situated in the vocabulary of principals who wished to succeed in the evolving environment of school reform. 125

The effective instructional leader was able to align the strategies and activities of the school with the school's academic mission. Thus, instructional leaders focused not only on *leading*, but also on *managing*. Their managerial roles included coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Bossert et al., 1982; Cohen & Miller, 1980; Dwyer, 1986; Glasman, 1984; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Hallinger et al., 1996; Heck, 1992, 1993; Heck et al., 1990; Jones, 1983; Leitner, 1994). 130

Instructional leaders led from a combination of expertise and charisma. These were hands-on principals, *hip-deep in curriculum and instruction* (Cuban 1984) and unafraid of *working directly with teachers* on the improvement of teaching and learning (Bossert et al., 1982; Cuban, 1984; Dwyer, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1990). Descriptions of these principals tended towards a heroic view of their capabilities that often spawned feelings ranging from inadequacy to guilt among the vast majority of principals who wondered why they had such difficulty fitting into this role expectation (Barth, 1986; Donaldson 2001; Marshall, 1996). 135

A CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Several notable models of instructional leadership have been proposed (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1990; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Van de Grift, 1987; Villanova et al., 1982). I will focus here on the model proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), since it is the model that has been used most frequently in empirical investigations (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). This model, similar in many respects to the others noted above, proposes three dimensions for the instructional leadership role of the principal: *Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a* 145

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Positive School Learning Climate (Hallinger, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a). These three dimensions are further delineated into ten instructional leadership functions (see Figure 1). 155
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Two functions, *Framing the School's Goals* and *Communicating the School's Goals*, comprise the first dimension, *Defining the School's Mission*. This dimension concerns the principal's role in determining the central purposes of the school. The dimension focuses on the principal's role in working with staff to ensure that the school has clear, measurable, time-based goals focused on the academic progress of students. It is also the principal's responsibility to communicate these goals so they are widely known and supported throughout the school community. 160

Within this model, the *process* of goal development was considered less critical than the outcome. Goals could be set by the principal or in collaboration with staff. The bottom line, however, was that the school should have clear, academic goals that staff support and incorporate into their daily practice. This picture of goal-oriented, academically focused schools contrasted with the typical situation in which schools were portrayed as pursuing a variety of vague, ill-defined, and sometimes conflicting academic and nonacademic goals. 165
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The instructional leader's role in defining a school mission was captured in a study of effective California elementary schools conducted by Hallinger and Murphy (1986). In the course of their study, they observed teachers in their classrooms for several days. One teacher had an affective education activity center entitled "I am. . ." in the back of the room. However, they never saw students working at it. When queried about this, the teacher observed: 175

Yes, the affective activity center is something I really like to use with my students. However, this particular class has not made the usual progress in basic subjects, so I've had less time for affective activities. Our focus in the school is on ensuring that every one of our students has mastered basic subjects. We really try to make time for optional subjects as well. However, *our principal expects us to spend as much time on reading,*

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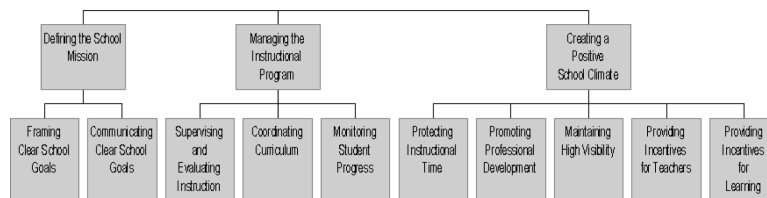


Figure One: Instructional Management Framework
From Hallinger & Murphy, 1985

FIGURE 1

writing, spelling, and math as is necessary to achieve this objective (emphasis added). So I adjust the time accordingly. (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986)

Later during one of his interviews, the principal repeated this expectation almost word for word. It was obviously something that had been discussed with and among the staff many times.

This comment captures several characteristics of the instructional leader's role in defining a clear mission. First, at this school the mission was absolutely clear. It was written down and visible around the school. Second, it was focused on academic development *appropriate to the needs of this particular school population*. Third, the mission set a priority for the work of teachers. Fourth, it was known and accepted as legitimate by teachers throughout the school. Fifth, the mission was articulated, actively supported, and modeled by the principal.

The second dimension, *Managing the Instructional Program*, focuses on the coordination and control of instruction and curriculum. This dimension incorporates three leadership (or what might be termed management) functions: *Supervising and Evaluating Instruction*, *Coordinating the Curriculum*, and *Monitoring Student Progress*. This dimension requires the principal to be deeply engaged in stimulating, supervising, and monitoring teaching and learning in the school. Obviously, these functions demand that the principal has expertise in teaching and learning, as well as a commitment to the school's improvement. It is this dimension that requires the principal to become "hip-deep" in the school's instructional program (Bossert et al., 1982; Cuban, 1984; Dwyer, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Marshall, 1996).

By way of example, I would again recall the principal in the example cited above. In discussions of how they monitored student progress, several different teachers at this school observed that the principal "knew the reading level and progress of all 650+ students in this primary school" (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985b, 1986). This particular behavior is not a requirement for instructional leadership. However, it reflects the degree of this principal's involvement in monitoring student progress and in managing the school's instructional program.

The third dimension, *Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate*, includes several functions: *Protecting Instructional Time*, *Promoting Professional Development*, *Maintaining High Visibility*, *Providing Incentives for Teachers*, *Developing High Expectations and Standards*, and *Providing Incentives for Learning*. This dimension is broader in scope and purpose than the other two. It conforms to the notion that effective schools create an "academic press" through the development of high standards and expectations for students and teachers (Bossert et al., 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Instructionally effective schools develop a culture of continuous improvement in which rewards are aligned with purposes and practices (Barth, 1990; Glasman, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982;

Mortimore, 1993; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Finally, the principal must model values and practices that create a climate and support the continuous improvement of teaching and learning (Dwyer, 1986; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985b). 230

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

A review of the literature by Hallinger and Heck (1996a, 1996b, 1999) found that instructional leadership was the most frequently studied model of school leadership over the past twenty-five years. The research on instructional leadership has been extensive and global in scope. Important contributions have been made by researchers in the North America, Europe, and Asia. Since the mid-1980s, scholars have taken advantage of these tools to produce an unprecedented number of empirical studies of principal instructional leadership (see Hallinger & Heck, 1996a; 1996b; Heck & Hallinger, 1999). 240

Research Trends

The most frequently used conceptualization of instructional leadership during this period was developed by Hallinger during the early 1980s (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a). Over 110 empirical studies have been completed using this model and related instrumentation — the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (Hallinger 2001).² This affords a useful perspective on development of interest in this construct. 245

Although early studies of instructional leadership using the PIMRS were conducted almost entirely in the United States, subsequent studies have spanned North America, Europe and Austral-Asia. If we break the period from 1983–2005 review into five-year periods, it is possible to see the trend of scholarly interest in instructional leadership since the inception of the effective schools movement in the early 1980s.³ 250

- 1983–1988 20 studies 255
- 1989–1994 41 studies
- 1995–2000 26 studies
- 2001–2005 29 studies

This trend demonstrates a consistency of interest in the topic of instructional leadership over this twenty-five year period among scholars in 260

² This paper has since been updated in 2005 but has not been presented or published. The figures presented here reflect the updated numbers from the most recent analysis in winter 2005.

³ The studies reviewed in the Hallinger, 2001 paper consisted entirely of doctoral dissertations that used the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale developed by Hallinger in 1982.

educational administration. The first half of the period reviewed, 1983–1994, shows the growing interest in instructional leadership following the emergence of the effective schools movement. As the PIMRS instrument became more widely known, the availability of reliable instrumentation and the timeliness of the topic of instructional leadership generated many additional studies. 265

During the mid-1990s, however, attention shifted somewhat away from effective schools and instructional leadership. Interest in these topics was displaced by concepts such as school restructuring and transformational leadership. This is reflected in the decreasing number of studies completed during the second half of the review, 1991–2000. Yet, somewhat surprisingly, interest in studying this role of the school principal has remained quite stable since then. This is probably related to the growing policy interest in instructional leadership and performance standards noted earlier. 270

Scholarly interest in the topic certainly cannot be taken as evidence of role enactment in practice. Indeed the trend of continuing interest in instructional leadership could also be explained by the growth of doctoral programs in educational administration internationally. Doctoral students need to complete doctoral dissertations and the PIMRS may simply be a convenient tool for achieving their aims. 275

Nonetheless, these studies both confirm continuing interest in instructional leadership and provide an evolving knowledge base upon which to understand the practice of instructional leadership in schools. Before discussing findings from these studies, as well as the broader literature on instructional leadership, it will be useful to define what we mean by this construct. As noted above, prior to the early 1980s there were few clearly defined conceptual models of instructional leadership (Bossert et al., 1982; Bridges, 1982; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). Moreover, with the recent emerging interest in this construct outside of the United States, it is quite important to arrive at a clear understanding of what the model represents (Hallinger, 2005; Southworth, 2002). 285

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Research Findings on Instructional Leadership 290

Scholars conducted a substantial body of international research on instructional leadership since 1980. While the quality of the research remains somewhat uneven, the scope far exceeded prior efforts at understanding principal practice in this domain (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a). Consequently, there is a more systematic knowledge base today than in 1980. 295

This body of research has yielded a wealth of findings concerning the:

- effects of personal antecedents (e.g., gender, training, experience) and the school context (school level, school size, school SES) on instructional leadership;
- effects of instructional leadership on the organization (e.g., school mission and goals, expectations, curriculum, teaching, teacher engagement); and 300

- direct and indirect effects of instructional leadership on student achievement and a variety of school outcomes.

Space limitations make an extended discussion of these findings impractical; interested readers are referred to other up-to-date sources (Day et al., 2001; Hallinger, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1990; Marks & Printy, 2004; Southworth, 2002; Witziers et al., 1983). In brief, the following conclusions from research on instructional leadership warrant specification.

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The preponderance of evidence indicates that school principals contribute to school effectiveness and student achievement indirectly through actions they take to influence school and classroom conditions (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b, 1999). The size of the effects that principals indirectly contribute towards student learning, though statistically significant, is also quite small. While a small contribution may be meaningful, it is wise to keep in mind the strength of the “treatment” in relation to the desired outcomes when policymakers focus on the selection and training of school leaders as a strategy for large-scale change (March, 1978).

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The most *influential avenue of effects* concerns the principal’s role in shaping the school’s mission (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Glasman, 1984; Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b, 2002; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985b; Heck et al, 1990; Marks & Printy, 2004). This finding is important in that the effect of the vision/mission variable is strongly substantiated by research on leadership outside of education (e.g., Kantabutra, 2003).

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The *school context* has an effect on the *type of instructional leadership* exercised by principals (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985b, 1986; Mulford & Silins, 2003). Bridges’ (1979) assertion that principal leadership should be viewed as both an independent and dependent variable also finds empirical support. In particular, the role that principals play in mission building appears to be influenced by features of the school context (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Hallinger & Heck, 2002; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985b, 1986; Scott & Teddlie, 1987). Successful instructional leaders work with other stakeholders to shape the purposes to fit the needs of the school and its environment.

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Instructional leaders also influence the quality of school outcomes through the alignment of school structures (e.g., academic standards, time allocation, and curriculum) and culture with the school’s mission (Barth, 1990, 2002; Dwyer, 1986; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b; Leitner, 1994; Southworth, 2002). Instructional leaders both *lead* through building a mission and *manage* through activities that increase alignment of activities with those purposes. This again finds support in the more general leadership literature (e.g., Kantabutra, 2003; Kotter, 2002).

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In 1980, popular images of instructional leadership portrayed principals 345 as evidencing active hands-on involvement in classroom. It is interesting, however, to note that relatively few studies have actually found instructional leaders displaying this type of hands-on supervision of classroom instruction (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b). Where principals do get more actively 350 involved in instructional supervision, it tends to be at the elementary school level (Braughton & Riley, 1991; Heck et al., 1990; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b). The preponderance of studies instead suggest that the principals' effects on classroom instruction operate through the school's culture and by modeling rather than through direct supervision and evaluation of teaching.

Significant progress has been made over the past twenty-five years in 355 understanding the nature of the principal's instructional leadership role. As a research topic scholars have studied the role extensively and with a variety of frameworks and methodologies. There is little evidence to support the view that on a broad scale at either the elementary or secondary school level principals have become more engaged in hands-on directed supervision 360 of teaching and learning in classrooms. The classroom doors appear to remain as impermeable as a boundary line for principals in 2005 as in 1980, or indeed in 1960, 1940, or 1920 (Cuban, 1988). By this definition, the resources devoted towards the development of principals as instructional leaders would appear to have been a failure. 365

Yet, if we define instructional leadership more broadly to focus on the dimensions of *Defining a School Mission* and *Creating a Positive School Culture*, the picture is somewhat different. Research on instructional leadership suggests that these dimensions of the principal's leadership role are becoming integrated more firmly into the principal's role behavior (Hallinger, 370 2004). In the concluding section of this paper, I will offer directions for reconciling these findings and considerations for thinking about the direction that future thinking about instructional leadership might take.

DISCUSSION

At the turn of the millennium, a global tsunami of educational reform has 375 refocused the attention of policymakers and practitioners on the question: *How can we create conditions that foster the use of more powerful methods of learning and teaching in schools* (Caldwell, 1996, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; 380 Jackson, 2000; Murphy, 2000)? This renewed focus on the improvement of learning and teaching has once again brought the issue of principal instructional leadership to the fore. Indeed, there appears to be a new and unprecedented *global interest among government agencies towards training principals to be instructional leaders* (Gewirtz, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Huber, 385 2003; Stricherz, 2001a, 2001b). This makes understanding the boundaries of our knowledge base about instructional leadership especially salient.

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Constraints on School Leadership

During the 1980s, the findings that emerged from the effective schools movement came none too soon for policymakers who were searching for policy tools that would transform schools. Administrative change was certainly an easier reform to fund and manage than some alternative strategies. 390 Nonetheless, some scholars questioned the capacity of principals to fulfill this heroic role.

For example, despite its grounding in research on elementary schools, there were relatively few references to the obvious need for adaptation of the instructional leadership role in secondary schools. Contextual differences were often glossed over in extrapolating the findings for policy and training purposes. In fact, the practice of instructional leadership requires substantial adaptation in secondary schools, which are often larger and more complex organizations. 395

Instructional leadership was characterized as a *rational* model of leadership (Bolman & Deal, 1992; Bossert et al., 1982). The underlying conceptualization assumed that schools would improve if principals were able to create clear academic goals, motivate staff and students to work towards those goals, monitor progress, and align teaching and learning activities to achieve the desired academic outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 2003). Unfortunately, as logical as this approach to leadership may appear, the nonrational, structural conditions that characterize schools make it difficult to enact over a long period of time (Cuban, 1988; March, 1978; Weick, 1976, 1982). 400 33

Even advocates of administrative reform in schools acknowledged that principals who demonstrated the type of instructional leadership needed to lift a school's performance were by definition a minority (Bossert et al., 1982). Research into administrative practice in schools had found an unmistakable pattern of practice whereby principals tended to avoid the instructional role even in the face of contrary normative expectations (e.g., Cuban, 1988; Wolcott, 1973). Yet with "research evidence" of the importance of instructional leadership in hand, policymakers crafted a change strategy that focused on selection and training of principals as a means for implementation of wide-scale education reform. 410 415

However, this strategy failed to take into account fundamental organizational forces that shape principal behavior. Cuban (1988) highlighted the organizational and environmental constraints placed upon principals who sought to enact this type of proactive, hands-on leadership role: 420

Well over a half century since Cubberly and other boosters of the principalship as a profession exhorted both newcomers and old-timers to be both loyal bureaucrats and sterling supervisors, there are reformers who see few conflicts or dilemmas in principals now doing both—reaching 425

to become Superman or Wonder Woman rather than a Clark Kent or Lois Lane. (Cuban, 1988, p. 65)

In a similar vein of critique, James March (1978) questioned whether 430 the vast majority of school principals by the nature of their social background, selection, and organizational socialization would ever fit the heroic model of leading rather than managing (i.e., maintaining) schools. Moreover, he wondered if the heroic model of leadership even fit the long-term needs of schools, which were, in the final analysis, large bureaucratic 435 organizations.

Much of the job of an educational administrator involves the mundane work of making a bureaucracy work. It is filled with activities quite distant from those implied by a conception of administration as heroic leadership. It profits from elementary competence. . . Educational 440 administration is a bus schedule with footnotes by Kierkegaard. It involves the rudimentary pragmatics of making organizations work—laws, rules, logistics, therapy; complicated questions of inference; the interpretation of information; and the invention and justification of 445 action; subtle literary and philosophical issues of human meaning; constructive criticism of daily events as art. (March, 1978, pp. 233, 244)

With these features of school organization in mind, March questioned the viability of a reform strategy founded upon the assumption that principals could provide the key leverage for change.

Roland Barth (1980, 1986) analyzed the day-to-day role of running a 450 school and asked why we would ever place the burden of leading a school on a single person. His assessment of schooling highlighted the conditions that are necessary to create a community of learners (Barth, 1990, 2002). A 34 former school principal himself, Barth concluded that principals who exercise effective instructional leadership are those who have the capacity to 455 motivate teachers to step out beyond the boundaries of their classrooms to work towards the transformation of the school from a workplace into a learning place (1990). He referred to these principals as cultural leaders. Their leadership behavior also appears similar in many respects to the behaviors specified in the mission and climate dimensions of the instructional 460 management model.

Normatively, the classroom has traditionally been the private domain of teachers in which principals may not be welcome. Moreover, in many cases principals have less expertise in the subject area than the teachers whom they supervise (Barth, 1980, 1986, 1990; Bossert et al., 1982; Cuban, 1988; 465 Lambert, 1998). This makes instructional supervision a special challenge, particularly in secondary schools (Marshall, 1996). The factors working against principals “getting into classrooms” are many, varied, and difficult to

overcome. This is the case even when the principal possesses strong intentions to do so (e.g., see Barth, 1980; Marshall, 1996). These workplace conditions have moderated attempts by policymakers to cultivate an explicitly “instructional leadership” role for school principals (Barth, 1986; Cuban, 1988). 470

Nonetheless, a broad reading of the literature would suggest that there is a more discernable emphasis on instructional leadership in the profession than existed two decades ago (Hallinger, 2001, 2003; Southworth, 2002). 475 35

There is little question that through more explicit socialization into this role principals increasingly see themselves as accountable for instructional leadership, regardless of whether or not they feel competent to perform it. The form that instructional leadership takes in practice tends to place the greatest emphasis on the mission and climate dimensions. *It is interesting to note the absence of any empirical evidence that principals spend more time directly observing and supervising classroom instruction than they did twenty-five years ago* (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b). This reflects the constraints discussed above (e.g., Barth, 1980, 1986; Lambert, 1998; 480 485 Marshall, 1996).

Reconceptualizing the Instructional Leadership Model

A broad reading of the literature on instructional leadership that has emerged over the past twenty-five years would have the instructional leader focus on: 490

- creating a shared sense of purpose in the school, including clear goals focused on student learning;
- fostering the continuous improvement of the school through cyclical school development planning that involves a wide range of stakeholders;
- developing a climate of high expectations and a school culture aimed at innovation and improvement of teaching and learning; 495
- coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student learning outcomes;
- shaping the reward structure of the school to reflect the school’s mission;
- organizing and monitoring a wide range of activities aimed at the continuous development of staff; and 500
- being a visible presence in the school, modeling the desired values of the school’s culture.

These features provide a useful point of departure for any principal who wishes to reflect upon his/her leadership. It is interesting to note that the instructional leadership model has often been interpreted as being top-down and directive. This undoubtedly came from the fact that the effective schools literature had focused primarily on “turn-around schools” which had been in need of urgent change. In these environments, successful principals 505

appeared to be highly directive leaders who focused on change in teaching and learning. However, the generalization of this model to all principals in all school settings was inappropriate in 1985 and remains so today in 2005 (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985b, 1986). 510

One of the major impediments to effective school leadership is trying to carry the burden alone. When a principal takes on the challenges of going beyond the basic demands of the job, the burden becomes even heavier (Barth, 1980, 1990; Cuban, 1988; March, 1978). This point was captured by Lambert (2002) who contends that, "The days of the lone instructional leader are over. We no longer believe that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for the entire school without the substantial participation of other educators" (p. 37). Thus, several different writers have attempted to integrate these constructs into a variant they refer to as "shared instructional leadership" (Barth, 2002; Day et al., 2001; Jackson, 2000; Lambert, 2002; Marks & Printy, 2004; Southworth, 2002). 515 520 36

While several of the scholars cited here have written eloquently about the possible forms this might take, the most ambitious attempt to study shared instructional leadership empirically was undertaken by Marks and Printy (2004). Their conclusion points the way towards one possible avenue of reconciliation for these constructs: 525

This study suggests that strong transformational leadership by the principal is essential in supporting the commitment of teachers. Because teachers themselves can be barriers to the development of teacher leadership (Smylie & Denny, 1990), transformational principals are needed to invite teachers to share leadership functions. When teachers perceive principals' instructional leadership behaviors to be appropriate, they grow in commitment, professional involvement, and willingness to innovate (Sheppard, 1996). Thus, instructional leadership can itself be transformational. 530 38 535 39

It is too soon to know whether the findings from the Marks and Printy research will be replicated by others. A second approach to understanding the relationship between these leadership models may lie in contingency theory. 540

In our review of the literature on principal effects (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b), Ron Heck and I concluded that it is virtually meaningless to study principal leadership without reference to the school context. The context of the school is a source of constraints, resources, and opportunities that the principal must understand and address in order to lead. Contextual variables of interest to principals include student background, community type, organizational structure, school culture, teacher experience and competence, fiscal resources, school size, and bureaucratic and labor features of the school organization (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b). 545 550

In our review we further concluded that the contingent characteristic of school leadership must be explicitly incorporated into theoretical models. Leadership must be conceptualized as a *mutual influence process*, rather than as a one-way process in which leaders influence others (Bridges, 1977; Jackson, 2000; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Effective leaders respond to the changing needs of their context. Indeed, in a very real sense the leader's behaviors are shaped by the school context. 555

Thus, one resolution of the quest for an integrative model of educational leadership would link leadership to the needs of the school context. David Jackson (2000) and Michael Fullan (2002) have observed that school improvement is a journey. The type of leadership that is suitable to a certain stage of the journey may become a limiting or even counterproductive force as the school develops. "Schools at risk" may initially require a more forceful top-down approach focused on instructional improvement. Instructional leaders would typically set clear, time-based, academically focused goals in order to get the organization moving in the desired direction. They would take a more active hands-on role in organizing and coordinating instruction. 560 565

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