Full Length Research Paper

Instructional leadership among principals of secondary schools in Malaysia

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The purpose of this study was to examine the instructional leadership role and the preference domain practised by Malaysian principals. It also examined the concordance between the level of instructional leadership and the level of students' academic achievement. PIMRS questionnaire designed by Hallinger (1987) was adapted and employed. This study involved 220 school teachers. Findings revealed that Malaysian principals had successfully implemented the seven dimensions of instructional leadership role. Findings showed the existence of concordance between the level of instructional leadership and the level of students' academic achievement. Hence, it implies instructional leadership role is vital in producing better academic achievement in schools.

Keywords: Principal's role, instructional leadership, academic achievement, concordance, quality instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Students' needs are very different from those two or three generations ago. One of the key reasons is that development of education is indeed slower than the development of technology in the global economy. In light of this, from a practical viewpoint, a paradigm shift in education is needed to make education as a key agent in the development of an "informative society", a portrait image of learning society and the value of life in the developed world. Learning society is a form of society that loves science and reading, as well as educational demand as a dynamic culture. Thus, the school curriculum should create students who are more reactive and 'moral shapers'.

Schools are educational institutions that play a prominent role in the intellectual and personal growth of students. Furthermore, school is the most important institution in the socialization of children because it can cause an impact on children's development. Hence, principal's leadership is often viewed as a major focus of efforts to pursue and achieve excellence in education. In other words, excellence or success of a school is influenced by effective principal leadership. According to Ubben and Hughes (1997), schools can make a difference to the level of students' performance; however, good or poor school depends on the person who leads the school.

Instructional Leadership

Before reviewing the role of instructional leadership, the main question here is: 'What is the real meaning of instructional leadership'? In short, instructional leadership refers to leadership that is directly related to the teaching process, involving the interaction between teachers, students and the curriculum. From a practical viewpoint, to implement leadership of the teaching process, a principal must play a role in the teaching and learning of teachers in terms of supervision, assessment, staff development and training services (Acheson and Smith, 1986). Keefe and Jenkins (2002) refers instructional leadership as the role of principal in providing directions, resources and supports to teachers and students in order to improve the teaching and learning in schools. While De Bevoise's (1984) opinion regarding instructional leadership involves the principal's actions to encourage growth in student learning. According to Sergiovanni (1984), instructional leadership refers to the ability to develop educational programs. These include the abilities to interpret the curriculum and determine the objectives of teaching, the diversity of teaching methods, determine classroom management, provide learning climate, implement instructional innovation, able to influence

and coordinate the teachers and students to achieve the goals of school education.

Instructional leadership and school effectiveness

Based on the philosophical stand, specifically, anyone can be an instructional leader if he has a vision, basic knowledge, willingness to risk, willingness to work for a long period of time, and willingness to undertake change, maintain growth, develop changes and to empower others (McEwan, 1998). A study done by Davis and Nicklos (1986) proved that the principal's role is indispensable in promoting staff development program to achieve the school's goals. In addition, Hall (1986) found that principals' support in staff development programs indicated an increase in knowledge, communication skills and participation in decision making among teachers. Consequently, the support of the principals in the success of staff development programs can influence the effectiveness of the school organisation.

Blank's (1987) study carried out on 32 schools in the United States provided a useful base from which to draw conclusions that principals do play their role as instructional leaders in promoting change in curriculum instruction. Schools' activities indeed encompassed the revision and implementation of innovative instruction methods as well as in-service training. In addition, Thorson et al's. (1987) study conducted in Hinsdale Township School District proved that peer coaching or supervision activities are able to enhance teachers' teaching performance.

Instructional leadership and academic achievement

It is not surprising to us that instructional leadership and academic achievement are significantly related as reflected in the works of a few leadership researchers. For instance, Andrews' (1987) study found that principal's instructional leadership is positively related to student achievement in school examinations. Andrews proved that teachers do have positive perceptions towards the effectiveness of instructional leadership when the classroom environment is good. In addition, Rossow (1990) outlined seven positive behaviors of principal such as priority to student performance, conducive school climate, clear goals, effective leadership, evaluation of students' progress, support staff development and coordination of teaching and learning programs have led to effective teaching and learning to improve student performance in academic achievement. Rossow's study substantiated that factors such as controlling the quality of teaching, paying tribute to the achievements of students, analysing and evaluating students progress directly

affect students' learning performance. As such, it is important to note that principals are directly involved in the teaching and learning programs in schools. Interestingly, Wang et al's. (1990) findings showed the school factors that comprised principal instructional leadership, classroom management, quality of teaching, classroom climate, student-teacher interaction and peers' influence have greater influence towards students' academic achievement. Furthermore, Duke (1993) found that staff development program which is 'Student-Based Staff Development' held in Albermale County Public School, United States is able to improve academic performance by 50 percent among poor students. Likewise, Bushman, et al's. (2001) findings on 118 schools in 24 different districts in California reviewed the efforts used by principals to improve education among low performing students showed that 84 percent of the principal focused on individualised instruction.

Principal roles as instructional leadership

Instructional leadership role is the premeditated process to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Therefore, the roles of principals as instructional leaders are to provide guidance to teachers on curriculum and pedagogy, encourage students to analyse weaknesses and guide teachers and students. In addition, instructional leaders should work with the limitations of existing school resources and improve the quality of teaching. Hence, it is a thornier path where principal must take into account the norms of the school in order to influence learning process positively.

From the perspective as mentioned, leaders must equip themselves with skills, knowledge and specific efficiency to be effective leaders. According to John West-Burnham (2001), knowledge and skills are needed to build personal values, self awareness, feelings and moral capabilities. When principals play the role as instructional leaders, they need to have the knowledge of learning theory and effective teaching. In other words, instructional leaders must have the communication skills and must reflect the symbolic power to enthuse their subordinates in their school organisation. In this context, principals as instructional leaders must possess leadership characteristics needed to influence all members of staff such as encouraging school programs and activities to make learning meaningful and involving students in all aspects related to school life. With the understanding of these complex issues, there must be a transition of the role of a principle as a school administrator to that of an instructional leader . Therefore, principals must have sufficient knowledge, experience and skills to participate in instructional leadership.

Roles and Responsibilities of Malaysian School Principals

The school principal's post is deemed as one of the oldest administrative post in Malaysia. Malaysian schools principals are responsible for many things related to school organizations. This includes striving to achieve the education policies in schools, managing and administering school curriculum, co-curricular activities and the welfare of students, teachers and supporting staff, providing adequate services to help improve teaching and learning and establishing and improving the climate and culture of the school.

Malaysian school principals'competencies are generally based on the Standards of Competencies of Malaysian Schools Principals provided by the Ministry of Education. The purposes of the Standards of Competencies of Malaysian Schools Principals are to strengthen the professional level of the principals; to provide guidance and documents that must be understood and followed by principals in implementing their duties and responsibilities; to open the minds of the community in understanding the duties and responsibilities of principals; to provide training and professional development of principals and as reference or guideline for principals to implement self-assessment and reflection of the school management.

Problem Statement

The theory and practice of the role of instructional leadership continues to be an important issue for those at the crossroad of scholarship and practice. With an understanding of this important issue, Lunenburg and Ornstein (1991) asserted that there are still disagreements related to roles and behaviors and the amount of time spent by principals in the areas of curriculum and instruction. In this context, Blasé, (2001) revealed that many school administrators spend their daily working time for administrative duties, which are irrelevant to teaching. Blasé emphasised that the factors that hindered the focus of teaching are issues not related to teaching, lack of time, pressure from the superiors, personal problems, and negative thoughts as well as principals' pessimistic behavior. Moreover, evidence from some empirical research have shown that the role of principals as instructional leaders is generally limited due to a few obstacles (Krajewaski, 1977). In light of this, among the obstacles identified, namely, patterns or types of work, problems related to stress and support, the increasing power of teachers' unions and the lack of power of the principals and principals' personal characteristics. According to McEwan (1998), most principals do not put instructional leadership as their primary responsibility due to lack of skills and training, lack of support from the superiors and the community as well as lack of vision, commitment and enthusiasm.

There is quite an array of studies that substantiate the failure of principals in performing their role as instructional leaders, namely, Croft (1968); Krajewaski (1977); Lovell and Phelps (1977); Fullon (1979); Ginsberg (1988); Cawelti and Reavis (1980); Hill et al. (1980); Howel (1981); Miskel (1991); Kyung and Miskel (1989); Georgio Professional Standards Commission (1985); Hallinger and Murphy (1987); Wildy and Dimmock (1993); and Taraseina and Hallinger (1994). For instance, Croft's study which (1968) examined the differences between the ideal role and the actual role of principals revealed that 50 percent of the teachers reported that principals never see them teach during class time, and 60.7 percent of the teachers stated that their principals were extremely rare in providing comments or suggestions related to teaching. This finding is inline with Krajewaski's study (1977) on 1,127 principals in Texas which proved that the principals do not play the role as instructional leaders because most of the time is focused on administrative and clerical matters. The results of his study indicated that principals are not instructional leaders. Furthermore, also from a practical viewpoint, Lovell and Phelps' (1977) study showed that 80 per cent of the teachers viewed principals in Tennessee do not monitor and discuss matters related to teachers' teaching. Whereas, fifty percent of the teachers noted that monitoring or supervision done by principals were not systematic and not premeditated. Additionally, Fullon (1979) noted that principals cannot be reckoned as good examples of instructional leaders because of the lack of time and exposure to training and guidance to serve as instructional leaders. His study showed that principals have limited knowledge as instructional leaders and have no foundation to become instructional leaders due to lack of leadership and management skills. According to Thomson (1988), teaching experience alone is not enough for a teacher to become a principal. Thomson's view is in line with Ginsberg's view (1988:78) as the latter concluded that "*With no specific course offered in the training programme, the area of instructional leadership, and with many of the skills ... never taught in the training program, the training of instructional leaders is in a sorry state.*"

Along the same thoughts, Cawelti and Reavis (1980) stressed that principals use only one-third of their working time for the purposes of supervisory activities related to teaching and only 20 percent of the time is used to visit classes and implement curriculum activities and staff development. Likewise, Hill et al. (1980) revealed that principals in the United States are facing insufficient time to serve as instructional leaders as the new tasks associated with administration is increasing from time to time, namely, correspondence, prepare reports, have consultation with parents, have work related to filling in of form, and solve students' problem that is not related to teaching until to the extent that they have to delegate responsibilities to

other employees. Consequently, they spent lesser time for supervision, assessment of teaching and interacting with teachers and students. In light of this phenomenon, Howel (1981) showed that on average, most of the principals used 25 percent of their working time to function as instructional leaders and 75 percent as administrative leaders. These findings seemed to be more aligned to Miskel's findings (1991) which showed that most of the principals in Australia play a lesser role as effective instructional leaders, specifically, in curriculum management and assessment of student performance. Furthermore, Miskel found that Australian principals spent 44 percent of their working time in the office and discussed less with the teachers regarding their students' achievement. The same study also argued that principals in the United States spent 45 percent and principals in South Korea spent 74 per cent of their time in managing work in the office. Those studies also concluded that principals allocated only 2 per cent to 14 per cent of their time for instructional leadership tasks (Miskel 1991; Kyung & Miskel 1989). In line with this, Georgio Professional Standards Commission (1985) in Atlanta, United States proved that 61 per cent of the teachers felt that their principals focused more on school managers' rather than instructional leader's role. Furthermore, over 30 percent of the teachers were not satisfied with the principal's role in communicating with teachers, supervising teaching, developing curriculum, planning staff development and principal's role in teaching.

In addition, Hallinger and Murphy (1987), noted that principals have to face various challenges and roles in their daily routines until they do not have time to plan and evaluate curriculum, supervise teachers, hold discussions with teachers in terms of resolving problems of teaching and learning. Moreover, studies conducted by Wildy and Dimmock (1993) in Western Australia found that principals submitted all the duties and responsibilities of instructional leadership to their senior assistant teacher and senior teacher at the department. They proved that principals do not play the role as instructional leaders. Their findings also share similar results with studies conducted by Taraseina and Hallinger (1994) in Thailand which indicated that principals in North Thailand do not perform the instructional leadership domain actively.

Most of the findings presented above indicated a failure of the principals in performing their role as instructional leaders. Majority of the studies mentioned have shown that principals are now less involved in matters of instructions, but more focused on administrative and school management. In this context, principals are often inclined to use time constraint problem as a key reason for not implementing the role of instructional leadership. Importantly, however, this kind of notion is not wise and appropriate to be used as an excuse for their less involvement in providing instructions. In fact, time

horizon on teaching and learning is the pivot process regardless of how busy they are. This is because teaching and learning is the heart of the existence of a school. According to Blasé and Kirby (2000:75): *"Effective principals understand that the key to improving their schools' effectivenss lies not with persons skilled in compliance with bureaucratic rules and procedures or in discussions about those rules, but in effective use of time allocated for instruction."*

From a practical viewpoint, teachers can acquire the ability to generate their own strength in order to inculcate the nature of growing thirst for knowledge, competitiveness in culture and commitment through guidance and support from their principals. Thus, principal plays a prominent role as an expert consultant in pedagogy that facilitates teachers' improvement in teaching, understanding the formal curriculum and ensuring that the curriculum is taught as expected (Cuban, 1985). Unfortunately, some school administrators served indirectly as a barrier to the implementation of instructional leadership. Therefore, in grounded practice, principals should incline themselves to instructional leadership in order to enthuse and inspire teachers to plan and carry out the tasks of teaching. Furthermore, Jacobson et al. (1973: 135); and Neagley and Evans (1980) added that the most prominent task of principal is to improve and enhance teaching.

From the local context, a study conducted by the Malaysian National Union of Teaching Profession in 1998, found that majority of the principals devoted their full time on matters pertinent to administration and management and they were not directly involved in teaching. These findings is in line with the Malaysian Schools Inspectorate Report (1993) which stated that many of the principals do not teach and check teachers' teaching record book and supervise teachers in the classroom. Conversely, according to the Malaysian Administrative Circular 3/67 (Revised 1982), all principals should be required to teach in the classroom at least five times a week. In short, as an instructional leader, principal should be directly involved in teaching and learning in his or her school because this involvement will enhance their professionalism and personal growth among students.

Malaysian Review Committee Report regarding status of education (1982:6) also emphasised that principals play an important role in the academic achievement of students in school. Addressing this point, principals who manage many activities of learning, maintaining effective supervision, as well as acting as a consultant, advisor and coordinator of programs for teaching and learning are able to improve students' academic performance in school. In other words, principals must adopt the role as instructional leaders and not just focus on administration alone because leadership can cause implications for academic achievement.

Based on local empirical research, most Malaysian

Hallinger dan Murphy (1985)	Krug (1992)	Hussein Mahmood (1997)
1. Frame the school goals	1. Explain school's mission	1. Set school's philosophy
2. Communicate the school goals	2. Supervise teaching	2. Form school's vision
3. Supervise and evaluate instruction	3. Build conducive learning climate	3. Set school goals and objectives
4. Coordinate the curriculum	4. Manage curriculum	4. Formulate and develop school policies & procedures
5. Monitor students' progress	5. Monitor students' achievement	5. Provide supports for teaching and learning
6. Protect instructional time		6. Control teaching quality
7. Maintain high visibility		7. Promote staff development
8. Provide incentives for teachers		8. Cooperate with school's external parties
9. Promote professional development		
10. Provide incentives for learning		

Figure 1. Domains of instructional leadership adopted from Hallinger and Murphy (1985), Krug (1992) and Hussein Mahmood (1997)

principals have the propensity to do administrative duties until it evokes insufficient time to provide innovation to the school. One of the reasons is because when a teacher becomes a principal, that particular teacher who has acquired a new experience or responsibilities is inclined to forget the previous experiences and responsibilities as an instructor. Arguing a similar point, principals are unable to function as instructional leaders because of insufficient depth in the knowledge of curriculum and instruction as well as no hard work in themselves (Manasse, 1984). In the same line and taking a more philosophical stand, the level of expertise and confidence of principals as instructional leaders still need improvement because the education field is becoming more sophisticated concurrent with the complexity of the technology and the role of schools tend to lead to interaction with the outside community.

Theoretical And Conceptual Framework

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the seven domains of instructional leadership that were adopted and adapted from Murphy and Hallinger (1987), Krug (1992) and Hussein Mahmood (1997) as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 depicts the six domains of instructional leadership namely explaining school mission, vision and goals, managing curriculum and instruction, supervising teaching and learning, monitoring students'

progress, fostering teaching and learning climate, promoting professional development and collaborating with external parties. All the six domains that have been used in this theoretical framework are based on the concept of instructional leadership from Hallinger and Murphy (1987) and Krug (1992). The last domain of cooperation with external parties was adopted from Hussein Mahmood (1997).

Conceptual Framework

Figure 2 depicts the direct and indirect strategies of a principal as an instructional leader to achieve students' academic performance.

The direct strategy is related to the behavior of a principal in advising and teaching that directly contribute to the students' learning. While the indirect strategy comprises the instructional leadership domains namely explaining school mission, vision and goals, managing curriculum and instruction, supervise teaching and learning, monitoring students' progress, fostering teaching and learning climate, promoting professional development and collaborating with external parties which are used by principal to achieve students' academic performance. This conceptual framework shows that instructional leadership can affect students' academic performance by using the seven domains of instructional leadership.

The intent of this study was to explore the teachers' perspectives pertaining to the role of principals as instructional leaders. Therefore, this study reviewed the practices among Malaysian principals in deve-
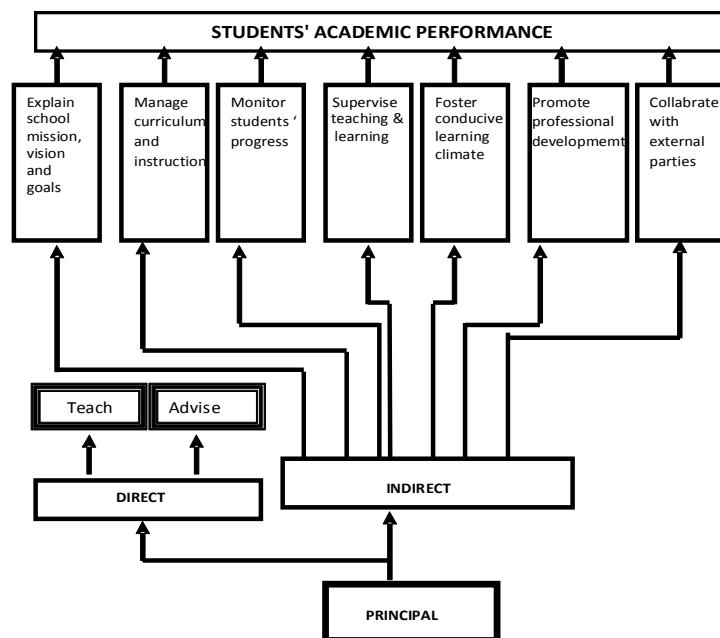
Figure 2. Instructional leadership model

loping teachers' quality and effective teaching. This study also examined the existence of concordance between instructional leadership and students' academic achievement in schools.

Research Questions

1. To what extent the Malaysian secondary school principals play their role as instructional leaders?
2. What is the domain of instructional leadership exercised by Malaysian secondary school principals?
3. Is there any existence of concordance between the level of instructional leadership and the level of students academic achievement of school?

Significance of Study

The significant finding of this study is that it identified the salient domain of the actual practices among principals as instructional leaders in Malaysian secondary schools. Therefore, in general, this study could strengthen the role and responsibilities of principals as instructional leaders. In particularly, it will enhance the awareness among principals pertinent to the role of instructional leadership towards academic excellence. As such, it will lead to a better understanding of the principal's role in accordance with the actual position held. Moreover, the results of this study will be useful to new and prospective principals as an impetus for them to act with more robust as instructional leaders as well as to examine their

strengths and weaknesses when implementing the instructional leadership role.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed the survey method purported to explore teachers' views pertinent to the role of principals as instructional leaders. The instrument used for this study was translated and adapted from the questionnaire of "Principals Instructional Management Rating Scale" (PIMRS) by Philip Hallinger (1987). Additional items borrowed from the model Krug (1992) and Hussein Mahmood (1997) which is associated with instructional leadership were also included in the questionnaire.

Sample survey

Stratified-random sampling was employed to determine the samples representing the population of teachers in the study, involving 220 teachers in Johor, Malaysia. At the state level, stratified sampling was used to select the possibility of schools from each district in Johor. Subsequently, the sampling within school level was conducted to select respondents of the study to represent schools for each district. Simple random sampling was conducted at the school level to select 20 teachers for all the 11 schools. All the respondents in the study consisted of graduate teachers and non-graduate
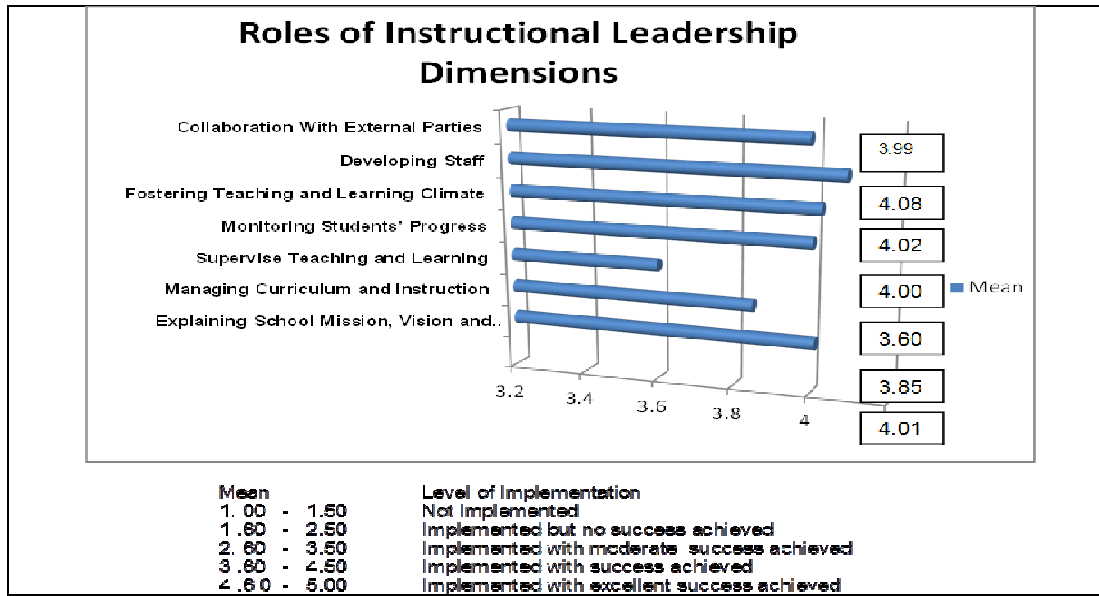
Figure 3. Roles of Instructional Leadership Dimensions

teachers who were not associated with administrative tasks.

Data analysis methods

The main method employed to analyse the data is descriptive statistics. Due to the fact that the questionnaire items are in nominal and ordinal data, the researcher used the distribution of frequencies, percentages and means to analyse and describe the results of the research findings. The intend of the analysis was to measure teachers' views on the seven dimensions of the role of instructional leadership among principals, namely, explaining the mission, vision and goals of the school; managing curriculum and instruction; supervising; monitoring student progress; encouraging the climate of teaching and learning; professional development and collaboration with external parties. The researcher compared the role of instructional leadership and school academic achievement to determine the existence of concordance between the level of instructional leadership and the level of students academic achievement of school.

Data Analysis

To what extent the Malaysian secondary school principals play their role as instructional leaders?

Figure 3 shows the mean scores on the principals'role. The results indicate that principals have successfully implemented all the seven dimensions of instructional leadership. There are four dimensions of instructional

leadership that have a higher mean score from the range of 4.00 to 4.08 namely; promoting staff development (4.08), fostering teaching and learning climate (4.02), explaning the school mission, vision and goals (4.01) and monitoring students' progress (4.00). The promoting staff development dimension has the highest mean score of 4.08, while the supervision of teaching and learning dimension has the lowest mean score of 3.60. Hence, the findings shows that four salient dimensions of instructional leadership are: Figure 3

i.   promoting staff development
ii. fostering teaching and learning climate
iii. explaining school mission, vision and goals
iv. monitoring students' progress

What are the sub-domains of instructional leadership implemented by the Malaysian secondary school principals?

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution and frequency of the principals in explaining schools mission, vision and goals. Each item shows the highest percentage in the category of 'implemented with success achieved' with relatively high scores of mean at the range of 3.90 - 4.21. It can be seen from Table 1 that principals develop detailed school calender have the highest mean score of 4.21. In fact, about 50.5 percent of teachers claimed that this role has been implemented with success achieved, and moreover, 35.5 percent claimed that this role has been implemented with excellent success. Therefore, based on these findings, principals in this study have successfully implemented all the roles of explaining school mission, vision and goals as perceived by

Table 1. Explaining the School Mission, Vision and Goals

DIMENSION OF EXPLAINING THE SCHOOL MISSION, VISION AND GOALS	Not implemented	Implemented but no success achieved	Implemented with moderate success achieved	Implemented with success achieved	Implemented with excellent success achieved	Mean	Total
1 Principal explains school vision and mission	0.0 (0)	3.6 (8)	26.4 (58)	46.8 (103)	23.2 (51)	3.90	100 (220)
2 Principal explains school objectives/goals	0.0 (0)	1.8 (4)	21.8 (48)	52.3 (115)	24.1 (53)	3.99	100 (220)
3 Principal explains school curiculum programs	0.9 (2)	1.4 (3)	15.9 (35)	55.9 (123)	25.9 (57)	4.05	100 (220)
4 Principal develops detailed school calender	0.0 (0)	0.5 (1)	13.6 (30)	50.5 (111)	35.5 (78)	4.21	100 (220)
5 Principal conducts school programs to achieve goals	0 (0)	1.4 (3)	24.1 (53)	52.7 (116)	21.8 (48)	3.95	100 (220)
6 Principal makes instuctional decision	0.0 (0)	0.5 (1)	22.3 (49)	55.0 (121)	22.3 (49)	3.99	100 (220)
7 Principal prioritize school academic goals through student assemblies, notice boards, murals, newsletter and circulation	0.0 (0)	3.2 (7)	23.6 (52)	48.2 (106)	25.0 (55)	3.95	100 (220)

teachers.

Table 2 depicts the percentage distribution and frequency of the principals in managing curriculum and instruction. All the items in Table 2, except item "principal gives more attention and supervision to teachers who are facing problems in teaching" have the highest percentage in the category of 'implemented with success achieved". Finding shows that "principal ensures instructional programs run smoothly and effectively" has the highest percentage (57.3%) in the category of 'implemented with success achieved' with the highest mean score of 4.15. Conversely, item of "principal gives more attention and supervision to teachers who are facing problems in teaching" has the lowest mean score of 3.57, and shows the percentage of 39.1 in the category of 'implemented with moderate success achieved' as presented in Table 2. In regard of this, principals in this study performed only moderately success in the supervisory role of teaching. However, in the middle ground, principals in this study has successfully implemented the role of managing curriculum and instruction as perceived by teachers

Figure 4 shows the mean of principals in supervision of teaching and learning as perceived by teachers. Findings shows that principals tend to conduct patrols from class to class to monitor teaching and learning process as well as giving freedom to teachers to do the measuring techniques in accordance with the appropriate development of instruction. These two items have the highest mean score of 3.96. While item "principal feature personalized learning for students to improve their language skills" has the lowest mean

of 2.90 with the lowest percentage of 24.1. Indeed, this item also shows the lowest score of mean and percentage among all the 75 items in the instructional leadership role.

Figure 5 depicts principals' role in monitoring student progress. It was found that principals in this study have successfully implemented 15 items of monitoring student progress with a high mean score of 3.71 - 4.29. Moreover, there are two items that have the highest percentage in the excellent category with a mean score of between 4.33 to 4.45. Findings shows that "principal identifies students who excel academically and awards prizes or certificates to them" has the highest mean score on seven dimensions of instructional leadership (4.45), followed by "principal uses assembly time to motivate students in their studies" (4.33). While item of "principal meets individually with students who encountered problems in their studies." has the lowest mean of 3.47. In light of this, finding indicates that principals do performed well in the role of identifying students who excel in academics and motivate students in their studies through assemblies but less performed in meeting individually with students who face problems in studies. Nevertheless, in this regard, principals in this study have successfully perform the role of monitoring the progress of students.

Figure 6 depicts the principals' role in fostering teaching and learning climate. All the 11 items in this dimension show that principals in this study have successfully promoted a conducive teaching and learning climate indicated by a higher mean score between 3.92 – 4.15. Items shows that the role of

Table 2. Managing curriculum and instruction

DIMENSION OF MANAGING CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION	Not implemented	Implemented but no success achieved	Implemented with moderate success achieved	Implemented with success achieved	Implemented with excellent success achieved	Mean	Total
1. Principal involves teachers in planning and implementing the semester curriculum	1.4 (3)	2.3 (5)	21.8 (48)	53.2 (117)	21.4 (47)	3.91	100 (220)
2. Principal guides teachers to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching	1.8 (4)	3.6 (8)	36. (80)	45.9 (101)	12.3 (27)	3.63	100 (220)
3. Principal ensures current disciplinary control of instruction has been carried out	0.0 (0)	0.9 (2)	17.3 (38)	52.7 (116)	29.1 (64)	4.10	100 (220)
4. Principal provides guidance needed to address problems in teaching and learning	1.4 (3)	3.6 (8)	35.5 (78)	45.0 (99)	14.5 (32)	3.68	100 (220)
5. Principal ensures teachers start the class and end the class in time	0.9 (2)	1.4 (3)	18.6 (41)	47.3 (104)	31.8 (70)	4.08	100 (220)
6. Principal informs teachers about the latest educational development pertinent to curriculum and instruction	0.0 (0)	0.9 (2)	23.2 (51)	46.8 (103)	29.1 (64)	4.04	100 (220)
7. Principal gives more attention and supervision to teachers who are facing problems in teaching	2.7 (6)	5.0 (11)	39.1 (86)	38.6 (85)	14.5 (32)	3.57	100 (220)
8. Principal discusses with teachers about the content and goals of the staff meetings	2.3 (5)	2.7 (6)	35.5 (78)	45.0 (99)	14.5 (32)	3.67	100 (220)
9. Principal ensures instructional programs run smoothly and effectively	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14.1 (31)	57.3 (126)	28.6 (63)	4.15	100 (220)
10. Principal ensures new and innovative teaching methods are shared among teachers	2.3 (5)	2.3 (5)	35.9 (79)	38.6 (85)	20.9 (46)	3.74	100 (220)
11. Principal ensures teachers use optimal teaching time to teach and train new skills and concepts	0.0 (0)	1.8 (4)	20.5 (45)	50.9 (112)	26.8 (59)	4.03	100 (220)
12. Principal is willing to accept creative ideas of teaching techniques and suggestions from the staff	2.3 (5)	3.6 (8)	23.2 (51)	55.9 (123)	15.0 (33)	3.78	100 (220)
13. Principal ensures instructional resource in the classroom is adequate for students and teachers	0.5 (1)	3.2 (7)	35.9 (79)	45.9 (101)	14.5 (32)	3.71	100 (220)

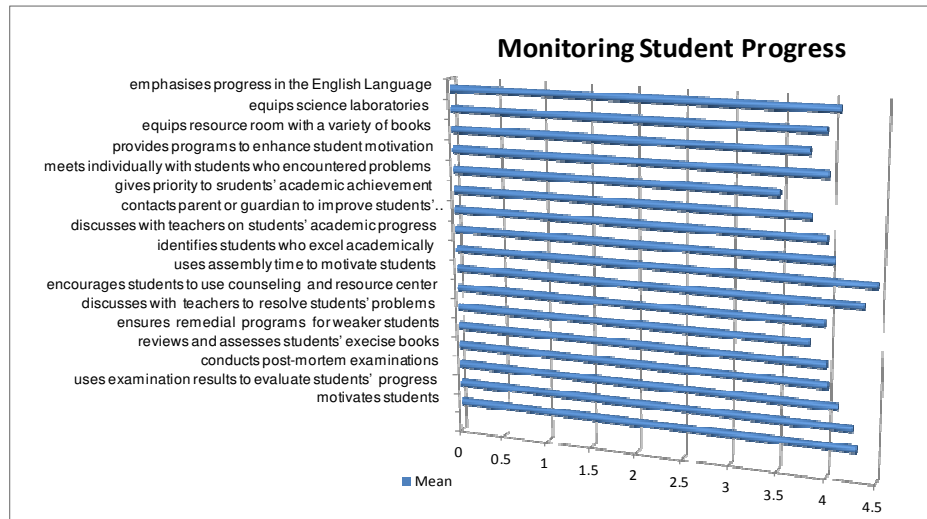**Figure 4.** Supervision of teaching and learning
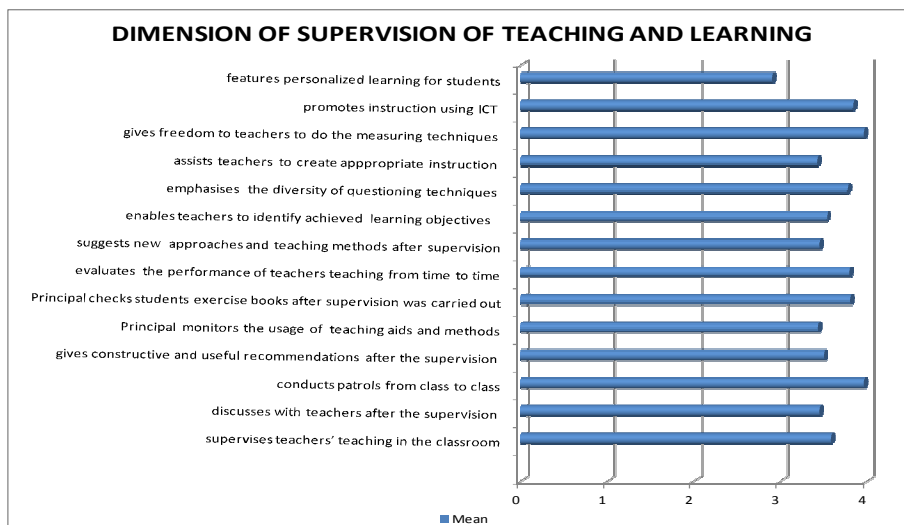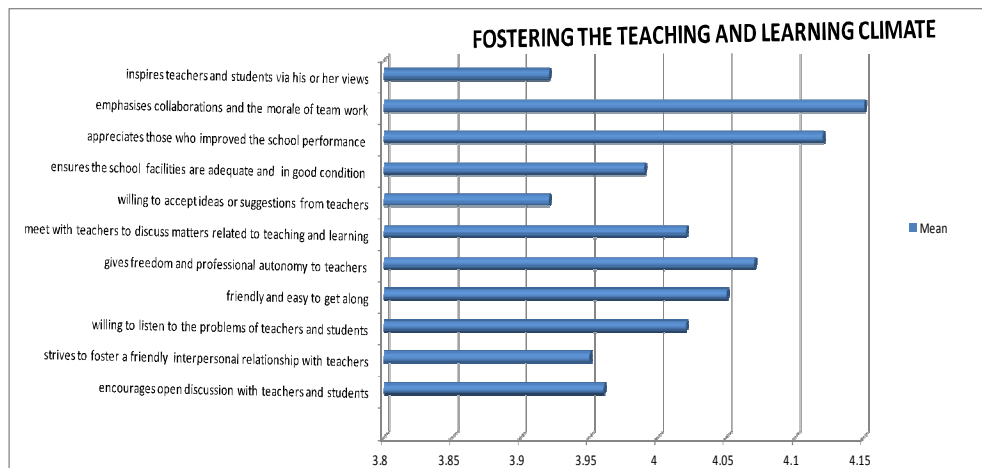
Figure 5. Monitoring student progress

Figure 6. Fostering the Teaching and Learning Climate

"principal emphasises on collaborations and the morale of team work" has the highest mean score of 4.15. However, there are two items that showed lower means in promoting teaching and learning climate, namely "principal is willing to accept ideas or suggestions from the teachers" and "principal's view inspires teacher and students" with the mean of 3.92. Overall, all the 11 items relating to the principal role in promoting teaching and learning climate are successfully implemented.

Table 3 shows the percentage distribution and frequency of principals' role in promoting staff development. All the seven items indicated that principals have successfully performed the role of promoting staff development. Finding shows that principals tend to encourage teachers to attend courses to improve their professionalism as this item indicated the highest mean score in this dimension with a mean of 4.30. About 47.7 percent of teachers claimed that their principal succesfully implemented the role of encouraging them to attend courses to improve their professionalism and a total of 41.8 per cent stated that this role was implemented with excellent success. Conversely, findings shows that principals in this study less focus in planning workshops and internal training to meet the training needs of teachers as this item indicated the lowest mean of this dimension (3.79). In light of this, this study provide a useful base that principals in this study focus more on encouraging teachers to attend courses to improve their professionalism, but less on planning workshops and internal training to meet the training needs of teachers. However, all the items in the dimension of promoting staff development has shown that Malaysian principals managed to perform the role of staff development in their respective schools.

Table 4 depicts the dimension of principals' role in

Table 3. Promoting staff development

DIMENSION OF PROMOTING STAFF DEVELOPMENT	Not implemented	Implemented but no success achieved	Implemented with moderate success achieved	Implemented with success achieved	Implemented with excellent success achieved	Mean	Total
1. Principal implements staff development programs in school	0.9 (2)	3.2 (7)	20.5 (45)	45.0 (99)	30.5 (67)	4.01	100 (220)
2. Principal encourages teachers to attend courses to improve their professionalism	0.0 (0)	0.9 (2)	9.5 (21)	47.7 (105)	41.8 (92)	4.30	100 (220)
3. Principal participates in staff development programs	0.9 (2)	1.4 (3)	20.5 (45)	46.8 (103)	30.5 (67)	4.05	100 (220)
4. Principal plans workshops and internal training to meet the training needs of teachers	0.9 (2)	5.0 (11)	25.0 (55)	52.7 (116)	16.4 (36)	3.79	100 (220)
5. Principal ensures heads of department in school to hold discussions with their teachers to share information obtained from the courses attended	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	12.7 (28)	50.5 (111)	36.8 (81)	4.24	100 (220)
6. Principal is the source of reference in implementing school's staff development programs	0.0 (0)	1.8 (4)	22.3 (49)	49.5 (109)	26.4 (58)	4.00	100 (220)
7. Principal empowers heads of department in carrying out their duty to improve the quality and performance of teachers' instruction	0.0 (0)	0.5 (1)	12.7 (28)	53.2 (117)	33.6 (74)	4.20	100 (220)

Table 4. Collaboration with school external parties

DIMENSION OF COLLABORATION WITH SCHOOL EXTERNAL PARTIES	Not implemented	Implemented but no success achieved	Implemented with moderate success achieved	Implemented with success achieved	Implemented with excellent success achieved	Mean	Total
1. Principal encourages PTA (Parents Teachers Association) to discuss students' educational problems	0.0 (0)	0.9 (2)	15.0 (33)	51.4 (113)	32.7 (72)	4.16	100 (220)
2. Principal seeks assistance from the District Education Office or the State Education Department in the implementation of the Secondary School Integrated Curriculum	0.9 (2)	1.8 (4)	21.4 (47)	50.5 (111)	25.5 (56)	3.98	100 (220)
3. Principal seeks advice from the District Education Office or the State Education Department to handle curriculum problems	0.9 (2)	1.4 (3)	17.3 (38)	53.6 (118)	26.8 (59)	4.04	100 (220)
4. Principal seeks cooperation with the school community and outside agencies to organize lectures and seminars on various subjects	0.9 (2)	1.8 (4)	22.7 (50)	51.8 (114)	22.7 (50)	3.86	100 (220)
5. Principal encourages parents to participate in school activities	1.8 (4)	2.3 (5)	21.4 (47)	50.9 (112)	23.6 (52)	3.92	100 (220)
6. Principal gets all kinds of assistance or facilities from local government agencies	1.8 (4)	3.6 (8)	22.3 (49)	47.3 (104)	25.0 (55)	3.90	100 (220)

Table 5. The level of academic achievement and the level of instructional leadership implementation

Secondary Schools In Johor, Malaysia	Mean Level of IL	Level Of IL Implementation	Percentage of Academic Performance (Malaysian Certificate of Education Examination)	Level of Academic Achievement
SMKTK (High School)	4.10	Success	100%	Excellent
SMSJ (Science School)	4.04	Success	100%	Excellent
SMAJ (Religious School)	4.05	Success	100%	Excellent
SMT (Technique School)	4.00	Success	100%	Excellent
SMKCC (Missionary School)	4.00	Success	93.1%	Excellent
SMKSAJ (Normal Secondary School)	3.97	Success	83.1%	Good
SMKJBP (Normal Secondary School)	3.97	Success	82.5%	Good
SMKTKB (Normal Secondary School)	3.80	Success	82.2%	Good
SMKSI (Normal Secondary School)	3.87	Success	74.6%	Satisfactory
SMKJM (Normal Secondary School)	3.78	Success	72.1%	Satisfactory
SMKTAB (Normal Secondary School)	3.47	Moderate Success	75.0%	Good

collaborating with the school's external parties. All the items in this dimension except item of "principal gets all kinds of assistance or facilities from local government agencies" show the percentage above 50.0 in the level of 'implemented with success achieved'. Finding indicates that principals in this study tend to encourage Parents Teachers Association to discuss students' educational problems " as this item has the highest mean of 4.16. Moreover, this item shows that 51.4 per cent of principlas has implemented this role successfully and 32.7 percent implemented it with excellent achievement. In contrast, finding shows that principals in this study do not get all kinds of assistance or facilities from local government agencies as this item have a lower mean score of 3.90 with a percentage of 47.3 in the level of 'implemented with success achieved'. However, all the items in this dimension showed relatively high mean in the range of 3.90 – 4.16. In this context, principals in this study have successfully collaborating with the school's external parties

Is there any existence of concordance between the level of instructional leadership and the level of students academic achievement?

Table 5 depicts the level of academic achievement and the level of instructional leadership implementation. Five schools show 'excellen't level of academic achievement namely SMSJ (science school), SMKTK (high school), SMAJ (religious school), SMT (technique school) and SMKCC (missionary school). These five schools have an 'excellen' level of academic

achievement in a range of percentages between 90 - 100%. Finding shows that these five schools that produced 'excellent' level of academic achievement are concordanced with a higher mean level of instructional leadership between the range of 4.00 to 4.10.

Whereas finding also shows that three normal secondary schools, namely; SMKSAJ, SMKJBP and SMKTKB that produced a 'good' level of academic achievement in a range of percentages between 82.2 – 83.1% are concordanced with a moderate mean level of instructional leadership between the range of 3.80 to 3.97. Likewise, three normal secondary schools namely; SMKTAB, SMKJM and SMKSI, that have a 'satisfactory' level of academic achievement in a range of percentages between 72.1 – 75.0 % are also concordanced with a moderate mean level of instructional leadership between the range of 3.47 to 3.87. Findings also indicate that SMKTAB school showed a concordance between a lower mean level of instructional leadership (3.47) with a satisfactory level of academic achievement (75%).

Overall, results described in Table 5 shows that all the secondary schools in this study except SMKTAB school have implemented the instructional leadership roles with success achieved. Hence, it is a proven fact that there are concordance between high level of instructional leadership and the high level of students academic achievement. Likewise, there are concordance between low level of instructional leadership and the low level of students academic achievement. Therefore, implication of this study shows that principals' role as instructional leaders is very important in producing good academic achievement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In brief overview, the findings from this study showed that Malaysian principals have successfully implemented all the seven dimensions of instructional leadership role. Specifically, Malaysian principals have the propensity to use four dimensions of instructional leadership role, namely, explaining the mission, vision and goals of the school, monitoring student progress, promoting teaching and learning climate and promoting professional development. The result indicated that principals do really focus on enhancing teaching and learning in schools. This finding underpinned the notion of researchers such as Ostrander and Dethy (1968); Wellish et al. (1978); Tanner and Tanner (1970); Dull (1981); Burch and Danley (1980); Hallinger and Murphy (1985); Acheson and Smith (1986); Blank (1987); Krug (1992); McEwan (1998); Blasé, (2001) and Shahril @ Charil Marzuki (1997). Those researchers mentioned indeed affirmed that instructional leadership should entail a variety of activities related to teaching to improve teaching and learning in schools. In other words, school principals should give greater priority to instructional leadership in order to achieve the goals.

In a different line of thought, however, this finding is in contrast to Croft (1968); Krajewaski (1977); Lovell and Phelps (1977); Fullon (1979); Cawelti and Reavis (1980); Hill et al. (1980) and Howel (1981) who substantiated that principal do not perform the role of instructional leaders for various reasons. For instance, Croft's (1968) study examined the differences between the idea and the actual role implemented by the principals indicated that 50 percent of the teachers reported that they have never seen principals teach before. Croft's finding is in line with Krajewaski (1977) who proved that principals do not play their role as instructional leaders because most of their time is focused on administrative and clerical matters until they neglected the important tasks of instructional leadership. Similarly, Lovell and Phelps' (1977) study showed that 80 percent of the teachers in Tennessee viewed that principals do not exercise observation and discussions on teachers' teaching. While Fullon (1979) also found that principals cannot be reckoned as good examples of instructional leaders due to the fact that they are of exposure to training and have insufficient time serving as instructional leaders. At the same point, Cawelti and Reavis (1980) indicated that only 20 percent of the time is used by the principal to visit classrooms, implement curriculum and promote staff development activities. Similarly, Howel (1981) in his study showed that most of the principals used 25 percent of their working time to function as instructional leaders and 75 per cent as administrative leaders. Furthermore, Hill et al. (1980) noted that principals in the U.S are facing insufficient time to serve as instructional leaders as the new tasks associated with administration increased periodically.

In addition, this study is also contrary to the studies conducted by Wildy and Dimmock (1993); Miskel (1991); and Taraseina and Hallinger (1994). Wildy and Dimmock (1993) noted that principals handed all the task and instructional leadership responsibilities to their senior teachers and department teacher assistants. In line with this, Miskel (1991) also found that principals in Australia are less focused on effective instructional leadership, particularly, in curriculum management, assessment of students' performance as well as discussions with teachers on matters associated with students' achievement. Moreover, Taraseina and Hallinger (1994) also found that principals in North Thailand do not perform the teaching domain actively. The findings contradict with the above studies that principals now have even lesser time to act as instructional leaders. However, the researcher contends that it is not wise to use time as an excuse to ignore the role of instructional leadership. No matter how busy though, principals must not ignore their time in focusing on teaching and learning because teaching and learning is the linchpin of the existence of a school.

In general, these results revealed that principals are more focused on explaining the school mission, vision and goals, monitoring student progress, encouraging the climate of teaching and learning and implementing professional development among teachers in schools. In the context of explaining the school mission, vision and goals, these findings concur with the notion of Duke, (1987); and Ubben and Hughes, (1997) which noted that every good planning starts from the vision and goals. They proposed that the vision of effective teaching is essential to the improvement of teaching and teacher development. This study also found that Malaysian principals are more focused on scheduling a detailed school calendar to guide teachers in explaining the school mission, vision and goals. As a matter of fact, it should be expected that school leaders should derive vision and mission to spark interest in school goals among teachers.

In the dimension of managing curriculum and instruction, findings showed that principals are more focused on ensuring a smooth and efficient teaching program but less on the role of giving more attention and supervision on teachers who encountered problems in instruction. Whereas, pertaining to the supervisory dimension, findings indicated that principals are more focused on patrolling classes to monitor the teaching and learning process and providing freedom to teachers to handle the evaluation technique accordance to the appropriate development of the teaching and learning process. However, they focused less on monitoring the use of teaching aids and methods of teaching and learning as well as providing room for students to improve their language and skills.

Subsequently, pertinent to the dimension of the role of monitoring students' progress, findings showed that

principals performed two roles excellently, namely, identifying outstanding students who excel in academics by awarding incentives or certificates and making use of the assembly time to motivate students in their studies. However, this study found that they are less focused on the role to meet with individual students who encountered problems in education. In terms of monitoring student progress dimension, this study is in line with the findings of Dwyer (1984); Hallinger and Murphy (1985); Sam Foong (1988); Rossow (1990); and Songan and Jashet (2000), which proved that principals do monitor student progress continuously. This result also concurs with the opinion of Bevoise (1984) who noted that principals should monitor teaching and learning programs in order to improve student academic achievement.

Whereas, roles related to the dimension of enhancing teaching and learning climate, findings found that principals were more inclined to emphasise collaboration and team spirit. This finding supports the notion of Byrne, Harttie and Fraser (1988); Mackenzie (1983) and Thandi (1979), that conducive school climate is able to enhance learning and performance as well as serve as a value-laden in school. Those studies mentioned above concluded that school climate is vital in determining the quality of learning in school. This is due to the fact that school climate has a huge influence on self-concept, ability to work and learn effectively as well as the ability to create interpersonal skills.

In the dimension of promoting staff development, findings revealed that majority of the teachers noted that their principals successfully encourage them to follow courses to improve their professionalism. The results also indicated that although principals focused less on planning workshops and internal school training programs to meet teachers' needs, nevertheless, they indeed implemented this role successfully. In particular, this study found that among the seven dimensions of instructional leadership role, professional development is the dimension that is relatively the most focused on. This finding is in accordance with the opinions of Wong (1971); Guskey 1986); Flanagan and Trueblood (1986); Holly (1982) and Mohlman et al. (1983), for this particular role changes the teachers' focus towards the achievement of school goal and teaching objectives. The key reason is that teachers need to develop and upgrade themselves continuously and constantly in their profession as well as participate as members of the learning organisation. Moreover, Wallace et al. (1990) revealed that teachers who attended staff development program are able to improve students' performance and achievement. These findings also have common views with Owen (1990), McEvoy (1987) and Purcell (1987) that school leaders must show initiative and support in providing greater priority to professional development among staff. These empirical studies are in accordance with the notion of Davis and Nicklos

(1986) that principal's role is important in promoting staff development program to achieve success for the school. In addition, Hall (1986) revealed that 82 percent of the teachers showed an increase in knowledge, communication skills and involvement in decision making due to the support of principals in staff development programs. In other words, principals' support towards success of staff development programs can influence the effectiveness of the school organisation. Similarly, Duke (1993) also found that the staff development program in Albermale County Public School, United States was able to improve the academic achievement of students by 50 percent among the poor students.

This findings also showed the existence of concordance between the level of instructional leadership and the level of students academic achievement of school. This concordance do exists between the high level of instructional leadership and the high level of students academic achievement, and is substantiated by five schools that achieved outstanding academic achievement. The results also showed that concordance also do exists between the low level of instructional leadership and the low level of students academic achievement. Thus, this finding implies that the role of principals as instructional leaders is very important in producing good academic achievement. These findings are in line with the findings of Weldy (1979); Andrews (1987); Wang et al. (1990) and Rossow (1990). For instance, Andrews (1987) noted that instructional leadership has a positive relationship with student achievement in school examinations. Whereas, Wang et al. (1990) revealed that school's element such as principals instructional leadership, classroom management, quality of teaching, classroom climate, student-teacher interaction and the influence of peers were very strong in affecting students' academic achievement. Additionally, Rossow (1990) outlined the seven positive principal behaviors leading to the effective teaching and learning do influence the improvement of students' academic achievement.

Implication and Suggestion

The implication of these findings indicated that Malaysian principals are able to perform the dimensions of instructional leadership roles in their respective schools. This implication supports the notion of McEwan (1998), that anyone can become an instructional leader if he or she has a vision, basic knowledge, willingness to take risk, willingness to work for a long period of time, as well as willingness to carry out changes, maintain growth, promote change and empower others. In light of this, the principal role is very prominent because whatever action he makes will determine the existence of a positive ethos to improve teaching. Thus, the researchers suggest that principals

must undergo formal training pertinent to instructional leadership, specifically, management of curriculum and instruction, teaching aids as well as exposure to information technology in teaching and learning to enable them to execute the role of instructional leadership in their respective schools.

In general, the results revealed that four dimensions, namely, explaining the mission, vision and goals of the school; monitoring student progress; encouraging the climate of teaching and learning; and promoting professional development relatively have the highest means in practising instructional leadership compared with other dimensions. The second implication of these findings indicated that principals have their own preference or priority to certain particular dimension when practising the role of instructional leadership. This finding implies that weaknesses still can be seen in terms of implementing instructional leadership role. This is due to the fact that not all practices are given full attention although other dimensions of instructional leadership also play an important role in the teaching and learning process. From the theoretical viewpoint, in fact, each instructional leadership dimension complements each other in order to produce excellence in school output. Hence, practically, to implement a successful and excellent instructional leadership, the researcher proposed that principals should be sensitive to all dimensions of instructional leadership by exposing themselves to the diversity and various activities of instructional leadership. Infact, effective instructional leadership requires a complex set of relationships between principals' faith and the school environment. Moreover, the value-laden principals leadership role, previous experience and expectations of communities and institutions must also be taken into account in implementing the role of instructional leadership.

The findings also revealed the existence of concordance between the level of instructional leadership and the level of students academic achievement of school. The implication of this study is that the role of principals as instructional leaders is essential in producing good academic achievement. At a more practical level, excellent academic results can be an evident that principals do play a vital role in implementing the instructional leadership role. Another implication of this study is that, generally, successful instructional leaders responded positively and practiced pragmatic understanding towards the school environment in order to help increase the performance of students. Based on these grounds, school principals should serve as instructional leaders to enhance effective learning and achieve excellency in students' academic performance. Thus, principals should equip themselves with the latest knowledge, related to curriculum in order to disseminate information to teachers who are in need. Furthermore, instructional leaders should meet up with their teachers several times a year to ensure that they are exposed to

the latest progress in their goals. In light of this, the researcher also suggested that innovative and creative principals with commitment and skills of administration and management ought to be given appropriate credentials.

Moreover, the researcher also proposed that principals and headmasters need to be coached and guided towards achieving effective planning as they are in the correct position to determine additional requirements, in terms of infrastructure, equipment, tools as well as teaching and learning aids. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education should also assist to channel financial resources to finance the development program. In addition, principals should guide their teachers to improve and maintain the quality of teaching in schools by providing support for developing teaching-learning process. Moreover, principals also need to provide feedback on teaching and students' performance, discuss, diagnose and resolve problems related to teaching with their teachers. Such cooperation can create shared responsibility in improving the academic performance of students. The researcher shares similar views with Stiggins (1999), who noted that instructional leadership involved continuous support to the development of progressive curricula and consequently ascertain the confidence and competence among teachers towards students' achievement. It is important to note that student achievement is the target of instructional leadership. Furthermore, in order to ensure the success of instructional leadership, the researcher also proposed that principals should practice distributed leadership in concordance with instructional leadership. This is an imperative approach to involve all the staff to be responsible for student achievement based on their respective areas of expertise.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a useful base from which to draw conclusions regarding the relative views of teachers pertinent to the principal's role as an instructional leader. To summarise, this study concluded that principals successfully performed the role of instructional leadership. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that principals still encounter obstacles to function as instructional leaders. This is due to the behavior of individual who has the propensity to follow the old paradigm of thoughts. Specifically, great work and principals' role lies in the hands of those who hold the post itself. Likewise, students' performance is not only dependent on the performance of the school, but it is also influenced by the management and leadership of the principal. In the theoretical viewpoint, if an effective school has no further progress, then the school effectiveness will decline. In other words, instructional leadership role must be established and sustained continuously in order to enhance the effecdt

effectiveness of the schools. This is because the culture of teaching and learning in schools is no longer confined to the traditional and rigid rules, methods and systems. In hindsight, advance technology is now creating a new image and identity in education, which is more flexible, motivate-creative to stimulate the development of students' potential. In light of this, students can develop their skills and knowledge, which is increasingly important in the world of information technology by inculcating technology in the education system. According to Mazarella (1983), instructional leadership can still be effective despite the role of principals becomes more difficult and complex. At this point, a caliber and quality management and instructional leadership are essential to develop an organization to achieve the objectives and goals of teaching and learning. Principals who practice successful instructional leadership role indeed know how to manage time and finance effectively and they focus their attention on priority to achieve objectives. They also have high expectations towards students' excellent academic achievement and they give full support to achieve common goals. The bottom line is, principal is the only sole person who has the holistic insight to envision the entire school program. However, these efforts entail moral support and commitment from overall professionalism of all parties. In light of this, the role of instructional leadership is complementary with the development of the teaching and learning process and this involves the implementation of innovative educational programs that aim to improve students' performance. In concordance with this context, the researcher would like to contend that students' excellence academic achievement will reflect the excellence of staff, likewise, excellence of staff will reflect the excellence of principal's leadership in the school organisation.

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