

How instructional leaders promote parental involvement: the Israeli case

Haim Shaked

Hemdat College of Education, Sdot Negev, Israel

Promoting
parental
involvement

1193

Received 3 May 2022
Revised 20 June 2022
Accepted 1 July 2022

Abstract

Purpose – Instructional leadership is an educational leadership approach in which principals are regularly and actively involved in a wide range of activities aimed at improving teaching and learning. The current study sought to answer how the principal's role in promoting parental involvement is part of their instructional leadership responsibility.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 24 Israeli principals. Data analysis was a three-step process: sorting, coding, and categorizing.

Findings – This study revealed that principals encouraged two types of parental involvement: academic-oriented, designed to support student learning and achievement, and non-academic-oriented, designed to accomplish other goals. From the instructional leadership perspective, principals should mainly prioritize academic-oriented parental involvement. Implications and further research are discussed.

Originality/value – The question of how the role of principals in encouraging parental involvement can become a part of principals' instructional leadership has not yet been explored. The present study narrows this gap in the existing research literature.

Keywords Instructional leadership, Parental involvement, Principals, The Israeli school system

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Instructional leadership refers to the principal's management of curriculum and instruction to ensure the effectiveness of the educational process (Neumerski *et al.*, 2018). As instructional leaders, principals consistently undertake tasks aimed at improving student learning and success, and their critical focus for attention is the behavior of teachers as they engage in activities that directly affect students' performance (Kwan, 2020). They are extensively concerned with the core activities of schooling—teaching and learning—so that students can achieve academic success (Hallinger *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, they prioritize implementing best teaching practices while giving everything else lower priority (Glickman *et al.*, 2017).

The current study deals with the relationship between instructional leadership and parental involvement. Parental involvement refers to the participation of a parent or primary caregiver in their child's education (Duan *et al.*, 2018). Research on the effects of parental involvement has shown a consistent, positive relationship between parents' involvement in their children's education and student outcomes. Parental involvement can improve students' attendance, behavior, and academic performance (Boonk *et al.*, 2018). Importantly, school leaders play a significant role in getting parents involved in students' education (Yulianti *et al.*, 2022). This study seeks an answer to the question of how the principal's role in fostering parental involvement fits into their instructional leadership responsibility.

Specifically, this study was conducted in the Israeli school system, which serves about 1.8 million students in almost 5,000 schools. The school system in Israel consists of three levels: elementary school (grades 1–6, ages 6–12), middle school (grades 7–9, ages 12–15), and high school (grades 10–12, ages 15–18) (Israeli Ministry of Education, 2021a). The primary role of Israeli school principals is to serve as instructional leaders in order to improve the education and learning of all students (Shaked, 2021; Capstones – The Israeli Institute for School Leadership, 2008).



Instructional leadership is the central theme of preparation programs for Israeli principals. The preparation programs are required to provide up-to-date and applied knowledge in this field, especially on the relationship between improving education, teaching, learning, and student achievement, and the role of the school principal (Israeli Ministry of Education, 2021b). In this study, Israeli principals were interviewed about parental involvement in their schools in order to understand how this can be a part of their instructional leadership.

The connection between instructional leadership and parental involvement, made in this study, is a significant contribution to the field because it is an aspect of instructional leadership not heretofore discussed in the literature. The implications of this paper, which highlights for both scholars and practitioners how attending to parental involvement is essential in the context of instructional leadership, are relevant not only to the Israeli education system but also to any other education system that views instructional leadership as the ultimate responsibility of school principals.

Theoretical background

Conceptualizations of instructional leadership

Instructional leadership can be construed as an educational leadership approach in which school leaders are continually involved in various activities designed to improve teaching and learning for all students (Hallinger *et al.*, 2020; Neumerski *et al.*, 2018). The framework outlined by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), which is used in more than 500 empirical studies (Hallinger *et al.*, 2020), divides instructional leadership into three main dimensions. (1) *Defining the school mission* – focusing on an easy-to-understand school goal directly related to student learning and outcomes and sharing this goal with the school community. This dimension is composed of two functions: (a) framing the school goals and (b) communicating the school goals. (2) *Managing the instructional program* – controlling, monitoring, and supervising teaching and curriculum. This dimension consists of three functions: (c) coordinating curricula, (d) supervising and evaluating teaching, and (e) monitoring student progress. (3) *Developing a positive learning climate* – creating a culture of ongoing improvement and high expectations and standards for both teachers and students. This dimension is made up of five functions: (f) protecting instructional time, (g) providing incentives for teachers, (h) providing incentives for learning, (i) promoting professional development, and (j) maintaining high visibility.

Similar to Hallinger and Murphy (1985), the framework presented by Weber (1989) delineates five dimensions of instructional leadership: (1) Defining the school's mission; (2) Managing curriculum and instruction; (3) Supervising teaching; (4) Monitoring student progress; and (5) Assessing the instructional climate.

Stronge *et al.* (2008) conducted an extensive literature review and listed five critical components of instructional leadership: (1) Building and sustaining a school vision: Developing a school vision that sets clear learning goals and gaining community support for those goals. (2) Sharing leadership: Distributing leadership roles by strengthening the expertise of teacher leaders to improve school performance. (3) Leading a learning community: Guiding a collaborative community of professional learners that provides meaningful team development. (4) Using data to make instructional decisions: Using evidence-based data in instructional decisions. (5) Monitoring curriculum and instruction: Examining and promoting the implementation of curricula and quality teaching methods by spending time in classes.

By synthesizing these main instructional leadership frameworks, we can identify the salient points at the core of instructional leadership, pointing to its four key elements: (1) *Instructional vision* – building and mobilizing support for a school vision based on goals for student learning and achievement; (2) *Instructional program* – coordinating, supervising, guiding, and monitoring teaching and learning in the school; (3) *Instructional climate* – creating a positive, results-oriented academic environment; and (4) *Developing teachers* – ensuring that teachers

continually strengthen their practice. Table 1 illustrates how the dimensions, functions, and features of instructional leadership, which make up the available frameworks, fall under the four key elements of instructional leadership.

Overall, instructional leadership requires school principals to focus their efforts directly on curricular and instructional issues with the goal of improving student learning and achievement (Hallinger *et al.*, 2020). Importantly, instructional leadership has been proven to have the most crucial positive impact on student outcomes in different contexts and school levels. Compelling research evidence, collected by a substantial in-depth body of studies conducted over many years, attests to the effectiveness of instructional leadership as an explicit direct approach for school leaders across diverse contexts. Even after controlling for other variables such as student demographics, the principal’s instructional leadership consistently accounts for significant variance in students’ academic outcomes (e.g. Day *et al.*, 2016; Hallinger and Wang, 2015; Hou *et al.*, 2019; Shatzler *et al.*, 2014). The current study explores parental involvement as a part of instructional leadership. To lay the foundations for this study, the following section reviews the literature on parental involvement.

Parental involvement

Parental involvement has been defined in the research literature in several ways. Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) suggested that parental involvement in a very general sense is “the shared responsibilities of parents in the education of their children” (p. 491). Castro *et al.* (2015) claimed that parental involvement is “the active participation of parents in all aspects of their children’s social, emotional, and academic development” (p. 34).

The research literature sees parental involvement as multidimensional. It comprises both direct and indirect aspects. Direct parental involvement is about actions, referring to parents who are active in relation to their children’s schooling (both home-based and school-based actions – see below). Indirect parental involvement is about beliefs and aspirations, referring

Key element	Frameworks’ dimensions/functions			
	Hallinger and Murphy (1985)		Weber (1989)	Stronge <i>et al.</i> (2008)
<i>Instructional vision</i>	Defining the school mission	Framing school goals Communicating school goals	Defining the school mission	Building and sustaining a school vision
<i>Instructional program</i>	Managing the instructional program	Coordinating the curriculum Supervising and evaluating instruction Monitoring student progress	Managing curriculum and instruction Supervising teaching Monitoring student progress	Monitoring curriculum and instruction Using data to make instructional decisions
<i>Instructional climate</i>	Developing a positive school learning climate	Protecting instructional time Providing incentives for teachers Providing incentives for learning Maintaining high visibility	Assessing the instructional climate	
<i>Developing teachers</i>		Promoting professional development		Leading a learning community Sharing leadership

Table 1.
The four key elements of instructional leadership deriving from prevalent frameworks of instructional leadership

to parents who emphasize the value of education and maintain high expectations of children's academic results (Benner *et al.*, 2016; Castro *et al.*, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2016). Direct parental involvement consists of home-based and school-based involvement. Home-based involvement entails activities at home such as supervising homework completion, talking about school life, and reading with children. School-based involvement includes activities at school such as communicating with teachers, attending class meetings, and participating in school activities (Duan *et al.*, 2018; Tan *et al.*, 2020).

Researchers found a strong correlation between parental involvement and various student outcomes. Parental involvement has a significant, positive relationship with student achievement (Boonk *et al.*, 2018; Jeynes, 2018). Student behavior also improves with parental involvement (Tan, 2018; Wehrspann *et al.*, 2016). Other benefits of parental involvement are increased student attendance and lower dropout rates (Malone, 2017; Parr and Bonitz, 2015). In addition, parental involvement is positively correlated with higher college enrollment rates (Carpenter *et al.*, 2016; Ou and Reynolds, 2014). For this reason, policymakers, school leaders, and teachers in many education systems espouse the need for schools to support parental involvement (Boonk *et al.*, 2018; Wilder, 2014).

The most common framework for modeling the factors associated with parents' likelihood of being involved has been proposed by Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues (Green *et al.*, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997; Walker *et al.*, 2005). According to this framework, the degree of parental involvement depends not only on the psychological characteristics of the parents, such as their self-efficacy regarding involvement and their beliefs about whether involvement is part of the parent's role, but also the characteristics of the school, such as the extent to which parents perceive the school as an inviting environment and view the staff as willing to communicate effectively about student progress. Thus, principals play an essential role in cultivating parental involvement (Heinrichs, 2018). The principal's attitude, communication, and leadership practices contribute to developing and maintaining the relationship between schools and parents (Barr and Saltmarsh, 2014). Principals can encourage parental involvement directly by addressing the parents to attend school events. They also can encourage parental involvement indirectly by asking teachers to invite the parents (Yulianti *et al.*, 2022). To support teachers in inviting parents to be involved, principals can facilitate professional development programs aimed at examining beliefs, assumptions, and biases and overcoming barriers to parental involvement (Jeynes, 2018; Marschall and Shah, 2020).

The research literature on the role of principals in encouraging parental involvement is limited. Specifically, the question of how this role can become a part of principals' instructional leadership has not yet been explored. The present study sought to reduce this gap through interview research and content analysis.

Method

Qualitative research methods, which involve asking participants about their experiences of things that happen in their lives and thus enabling researchers to understand the perspectives of others, are the most appropriate when existing knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation is limited (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, this was the method chosen for the current study. The following sections describe this study's sample, how information was gathered, and analytical strategies.

Participants

Instructional leadership differs between elementary schools and secondary (middle and high) schools (Gedik and Bellibas, 2015). This difference can be related to various school

characteristics, such as the fact that elementary school teachers often teach multiple subjects, whereas secondary schools teachers usually teach a single disciplinary subject, or that secondary schools are often more crowded than elementary schools (Hallinger, 2012). Parental involvement is also different in elementary school compared to high school because the needs of children and their relationships with their parents change with age (Boonk *et al.*, 2018). Since instructional leadership and parental involvement cannot be examined in the same manner in elementary schools as in secondary schools, this study focused on elementary schools.

The sampling for this study was intended to create a sample similar to the population of about 2,750 elementary school principals in Israel in terms of age, sex, seniority, and education. Two-thirds of principals in Israel are females, and one-third are males. Their average age is 50, and they have an average of 11 years of school leadership experience. As for their education, 65% of Israeli principals have a master's degree or higher, 35% have a bachelor's degree, and 8% do not hold an academic degree (Capstones – The Israeli Institute for School Leadership, 2012).

The goal was to “interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 113). Thus, the current study included 24 principals. To build the study sample, 12 superintendents from all six Israeli school districts were asked to recommend possible participants they considered as instructional leaders. However, the recommended principals were included in the study only if their participation matched the characteristics of the larger population of elementary school principals in Israel (24 participants out of the 42 recommended). Therefore, the current study included 17 females and seven males aged between 39 and 60 years old with an average age of 49.2. They had 4–27 years of experience in school leadership, and their average experience was 11.4 years. One principal had no academic degree, four principals had a bachelor's degree, 18 principals had a master's degree, and one had a doctorate. Table 2 presents the information of the study participants.

Data collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews because they provided unique access to the real world of the study participants describing their activities in their own words (Mann, 2016; Rossman and Rallis, 2017). To get descriptive answers, open-ended questions were used in the interviews, such as: “What avenues of parental involvement exist in your school? Why?”; “To what extent and in what ways do you work to promote parental involvement in your school?”; “How important is parental involvement to you? Why?”. While the participants were asked to answer predefined questions, the semi-structured interviews were conversational. The researcher as an interviewer changed the order of the questions based on the participants' responses, encouraged them to expand their answers, and added questions that arose from previous answers. This allowed the interviewer to “respond to the situation at hand, to the respondent's emerging worldview and to new ideas on the subject” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 111). The average length of the interviews was fifty minutes. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted as needed to clarify questions that emerged during a review of the interview transcripts (three follow-up interviews were conducted, with an average length of twenty minutes). All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

For ethical reasons, all the participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could exit the study at any time (no one asked to leave). It was made clear to them that the superintendent who recommended them as potential participants would not know whether they had participated in the study. They were promised confidentiality (pseudonyms were assigned) and were asked to provide written consent based on an understanding of the purpose of the study.

Table 2.
Study participants'
information

	Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Principalship experience	Education	District	School size (No. of students)
1	Angela	Female	41	11	MA	North	300
2	Anne	Female	49	5	BA	Tel Aviv	650
3	Barbara	Female	44	7	MA	Haifa	400
4	Bruce	Male	46	13	MA	South	200
5	Carl	Male	52	14	MA	Jerusalem	250
6	David	Male	49	7	MA	North	250
7	Deborah	Female	50	10	BA	North	200
8	Diana	Female	60	22	MA	South	400
9	Dorothy	Female	46	11	MA	Jerusalem	350
10	Douglas	Male	51	9	BA	Jerusalem	450
11	Elizabeth	Female	60	18	MA	Haifa	350
12	Esther	Female	57	10	BA	North	300
13	Jacob	Male	60	24	MA	Center	300
14	Jennifer	Female	41	16	MA	Jerusalem	350
15	John	Male	43	6	MA	Jerusalem	250
16	Kathryn	Female	58	27	–	South	350
17	Laura	Female	46	14	MA	Tel Aviv	250
18	Lisa	Female	48	4	MA	Center	550
19	Pamela	Female	51	4	MA	Jerusalem	200
20	Phyllis	Female	42	5	MA	Center	450
21	Rachel	Female	46	14	MA	Haifa	300
22	Ronald	Male	53	9	MA	South	150
23	Ruth	Female	48	4	PhD	South	450
24	Virginia	Female	39	9	MA	Center	500

Data analysis

Data analysis was a three-step process: sorting, coding, and categorizing. The first step was sorting, which “is not something separate from the analysis. It is a part of analysis. The researcher’s decisions – which data chunks to code and which to pull out . . . are all analytic choices” (Miles *et al.*, 2014, p. 12). This step aimed to search for statements related in some way to instructional leadership (based on the frameworks functions of instructional leadership presented above in the Theoretical Background section) and parental involvement. The second step was coding. The statements identified in the previous step were connected to a named code that represented an idea or concept to reflect the activities of the principals who participated in this study (Creswell and Poth, 2018). During coding, a master list of all the codes used in the research study was kept for the codes to be reapplied to new statements each time an appropriate statement was encountered. It was open, data-driven coding rather than concept-driven coding because the researcher did not approach the data with a developed system of codes but instead looked for concepts in the text (Saldaña and Omasta, 2018). The third step was categorizing. After capturing their essence, similar statements were gathered into clusters to generalize their meanings and produce categories. The clusters were created several times, each time in a different configuration. It was like “decorating a room; you try it, step back, move a few things, step back again, try a serious reorganization, and so on” (Abbott, 2004, p. 215). In the end, the distinction between academic-oriented and non-academic-oriented parental involvement was found to be the most appropriate and therefore formed the basis for the Findings chapter.

Findings

This study explored how principals’ work to promote parental involvement was related to their instructional leadership role. Qualitative data analysis revealed that principals

encouraged two types of parental involvement. The first was academic-oriented parental involvement, designed to support student learning and achievement and therefore related to principals' instructional leadership responsibility. The second was non-academic-oriented parental involvement, designed to achieve goals unrelated to students' academic knowledge and results and therefore unrelated to principals' instructional leadership duty. The following sections present these findings, supported by excerpts typifying participants' voices.

Academic-oriented parental involvement

Interview data suggested that the first type of parental involvement was academic-oriented. As part of this type, the study participants' efforts to increase parental involvement aimed to enhance student learning and academic performance. This type of parental involvement supported the responsibility of the principals' instructional leadership to improve teaching, learning, and achievement.

The academic-oriented parental involvement activity most frequently mentioned by study participants was meetings with parents about their children's academic progress. These meetings were held on two main occasions: parents' evenings and individual appointments.

For the study participants, parents' evenings allowed teachers to inform parents about their children's progress in each of the subject areas in order to improve their academic performance. They claimed that when parents are aware of their children's results, they work to advance them academically in a variety of ways, such as supervising homework, studying together for exams, sending them to private lessons, and more (see below on home-based parental involvement). Barbara said: "The purpose of parents' evenings is for parents to meet their children's teachers and understand their successes and areas for improvement". Douglas said: "We believe that when teachers and parents interact, it can improve the students' attendance, progress, and attainment in school".

Although the common practice of parents' evening was mainly focused on academic results, Phyllis said: "I ask my teachers to inform the parents not only about the academic aspect but also about the social and emotional aspect". Jacob noted a non-academic goal for parents' evenings: "My purpose is that the parents won't say later that we have not told them exactly what their children's situation is".

Like parents' evenings, the principals also mentioned individual meetings with parents about students struggling in school. Some of these meetings were attended by the principal, along with other staff members, such as a psychologist or counselor. Elizabeth asserted: "I make sure to be well-prepared for these meetings because when we communicate with the parents effectively, students do better".

Another academic-oriented parental involvement activity described by the study participants was events marking the end of a unique learning process. From the study participants' perspective, these events involved parents in the subjects studied at school. Carl perceived parent participation as motivating students to invest efforts in an academic project: "In our school, we conduct a process of scientific research, and to energize the children, we tell them from the beginning that the graduation ceremony will be attended by the parents". Jennifer saw parental participation as giving a unique value to the learning process: "The fact that parents come to mark the end of a learning process says that it is an important and significant process, and it has a message about what is important in our school". Somewhat differently, some principals mostly wanted to impress the parents. Deborah said that they invite parents "to show them that we are doing creative work here". For Kathryn, the reason to invite parents is: "Parents expect it and love these evenings, so we organize them".

An additional academic-oriented parental involvement activity mentioned by study participants was keeping parents informed about what their children learn. Weekly classroom

newsletters often include both academic-oriented and non-academic topics. The study participants expected their teachers to include in the weekly classroom newsletters not only non-academic information, such as announcements of an upcoming school trip or a list of items parents could save for class projects, but also descriptions of study units and suggestions for supplementing them at home. Lisa said: "Naturally, newsletters include all sorts of things. It is important to me that they include, among other things, and preferably at the beginning, instructional issues such as what materials were covered and exams days". Ruth said: "Parents rarely ask their children "what do you learn in school?", But when they read the newsletter, they can ask "what do you learn about ecological sustainability?" and have conversations with them about the topics being studied".

Non-academic-oriented parental involvement

Qualitative data indicated that the second type of parental involvement was non-academic-oriented. Some of the parental involvement described by the study participants was unrelated to student learning and results. This type of parental involvement did not seek to improve teaching, learning, and achievements, thus did not support the principals' instructional leadership efforts.

Several principals organized performances in which students sang, danced, or performed. Some of these performances had no theme, and they were designed to enable the students to demonstrate their skills. In other cases, they had topics that were unrelated to the curriculum. Instead, they dealt with holidays, educational issues (e.g. road safety), or values (e.g. patriotism). Bruce is a principal of a school that encouraged music studies, even though it was not part of their curriculum. A concert for parents was held once a year by all the students who participated in music lessons. Anne is a principal of a school where sixth-grade students put on a big show for the parents every year. They chose a topic that was unrelated to the curriculum and engaged in preparations for the show for several months. They learned a bit about the subject of the play to understand it; however, this project did not have instructional goals.

Other principals believed in the importance of shared experiential events for parents and children. These events did not have instructional goals and were for pleasure only. Laura hired a company that organizes contests for parents and children together. The teachers at the school where Ronald served as principal prepared an evening of games for parents and children. At the school of Esther, parents and students enjoyed a day outdoors together.

Other principals organized lectures and workshops for parents about parenting challenges, which had nothing to do with their children's learning and achievements. Rachel brought a lecture on Internet safety to the school: "To help our students maximize the Internet's benefits while minimizing the risks, we offer parents tips and tools on how to ensure their children's responsible online behavior". Dorothy invited parents to participate in a workshop on the challenges of adolescence: "Parents of teenagers look for advice about how to survive the teen years, and our job as a school is to provide them with guidance". Angela introduced the parents to a sex education specialist: "Many parents find that talking to their children about sex and sexuality can be challenging. I think our job is to give them tools".

According to the study participants, parent volunteers were an invaluable resource. However, they directed parent volunteers mainly to non-instructional activities such as art projects, holiday celebrations, and fundraising. For them, parent volunteers could chaperon field trips, host class parties, renovate school buildings, decorate the classroom, or prepare refreshments for school events. They did not ask them to act as a classroom helper or tutor struggling students. In some cases, parents were invited to lecture at the school about their job or area of expertise. However, these lectures did not have an instructional goal.

It should be noted that some study participants argued that non-academic-oriented parental involvement also contributes to student learning and achievement. Diana asserted: “even when parents assist with a party or collect donations, they deepen their relationship with, and their trust in, their children’s school”.

Discussion

This study explored parental involvement through the prism of instructional leadership. The research consensus is that parental involvement is multidimensional. It consists of direct and indirect aspects and includes home-based and school-based activities (Benner *et al.*, 2016; Castro *et al.*, 2015; Duan *et al.*, 2018). This study suggests that from the instructional leadership perspective, one further distinction should be added to the multidimensionality of parental involvement: the distinction between academic-oriented and non-academic-oriented parental involvement. Academic-oriented parental involvement is directly connected to student learning and outcomes. In contrast, non-academic-oriented parental involvement does not seek to support student learning and achievement but instead accomplishes other goals. The principals who participated in this study distributed their efforts between academic-oriented and non-academic-oriented parental involvement. They initiated parental involvement activities that concentrated on learning and academic progress, such as parents’ evenings, meetings with the parents of a student who has difficulty studying, and events marking the end of a learning process. However, they also promoted many non-academic-oriented parental involvement activities such as performances, experiential events, or lectures unrelated to the school’s instructional goals.

Under instructional leadership, the role of the principal is profoundly involved with ensuring that effective teaching and learning occur since the goal of instructional leadership is for principals to increase student academic performance (Hallinger *et al.*, 2020; Neumerski *et al.*, 2018). Thus, principals as instructional leaders are called upon to examine every field and activity in the school through the prism of student learning and results (Glickman *et al.*, 2017). The current study shows that parental involvement should also be examined through this prism and therefore be classified into academic-oriented and non-academic-oriented parental involvement. Academic-oriented parental involvement supports the principal’s instructional leadership, whereas non-academic-oriented parental involvement is much less related to this leadership approach.

As reviewed above, the key elements of instructional leadership are (1) *Instructional vision* – developing a shared vision of effective teaching and learning; (2) *Instructional program* – coordinating, directing, and observing teaching and learning in the school; (3) *Instructional climate* – nurturing a positive, outcome-oriented academic environment; and (4) *Developing teachers* – ensuring that teachers constantly acquire new skills. Thus, instructional leadership may be viewed as expecting principals to focus primarily on internal teaching and learning processes. It can be claimed that, according to the instructional leadership approach, the principal should concentrate on the teachers’ work while attaching less importance to external stakeholders such as parents. The findings of this study, however, illustrate how parental involvement can be academic-oriented and therefore form part of the principal’s instructional leadership. Through events attended by parents, which are related to the curriculum and student learning and results, principals advance the school towards its instructional goals.

Specifically, the participants of this study emphasized direct, school-based parental involvement. They rarely described themselves as fostering home-based parental involvement by encouraging parents to help their children with homework, check their educational progress, or read with them. They also scarcely described themselves as nurturing indirect parental involvement by stimulating parents’ high expectations and

aspirations for their children's academic achievement and schooling. Moreover, they hardly mentioned a request from teachers to promote home-based and indirect parental involvement. Instead, they focused on school-based parental involvement by organizing school events with the parents' participation and inviting them to the school for various purposes. While home-based and indirect parental involvement activities are usually academic-oriented because they entail encouragement and high expectations for learning, school-based parental involvement can be both academic-oriented and non-academic-oriented. Principals who aspire to become instructional leaders should prioritize academic-oriented school-based parental involvement. Moreover, they should also promote home-based parental involvement, which shows promises according to its correlation with academic achievement (Boonk *et al.*, 2018).

We have known for decades that, among other things, parental involvement depends on the extent to which parents see the school as a welcoming environment and the staff as willing to communicate effectively about student learning and results (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997; Green *et al.*, 2007; Walker *et al.*, 2005). Thus, school leaders play an essential role in getting parents involved in their children's education (Yulianti *et al.*, 2022). The findings of this study suggest that insofar as not all parental involvement activities are equally important in achieving the school's instructional goals, principals who aspire to demonstrate instructional leadership should pay attention to encouraging mainly academic-oriented parental involvement, which supports their instructional leadership efforts. It is not sufficient to expand parental participation in general; it should be explicitly targeted at improving student learning and achievement.

Practically, it seems advisable to discuss the importance of academic-oriented parental involvement with prospective and current principals, in various stages of their educational careers, such as preparation programs, mentoring programs provided to beginning principals, and professional development as principals. It is also a topic that is important to discuss along with a wide spectrum of school stakeholders, such as the school board as the immediate formal authority and employer of both principals and school staff; the parents, either as individuals or in the form of parents' committees as an organized actor; policymakers at the national and regional levels; and the local community.

Compared to existing research, this study provides new data on instructional leadership and parental involvement. However, it has several limitations. First, the findings were collected within the Israeli context, and therefore their cross-cultural validity was not proven. This study should be replicated in various socio-cultural contexts to examine the findings' international validity. Second, this study was based on self-reporting qualitative data, and therefore there was limited control over the possibility that respondents provided socially desirable responses. Future research could employ more objective measures of school leaders' efforts to promote parental involvement, such as direct observations. Quantitative data could also be used to support the qualitative findings. Third, this study did not identify a correlation between the principals' perceptions and their characteristics, such as gender, experience, and education. Such differences may be found in a study using a more significant number of participants.

Conclusion

The current study inquired into parental involvement through the prism of instructional leadership, which demands principals to be involved in various activities to improve the curriculum, instruction, and student results. The findings differentiated between two types of parental involvement: academic-oriented and non-academic-oriented. Academic-oriented parental involvement is intended to promote student learning and achievement and therefore is linked with instructional leadership. In contrast, non-academic-oriented parental involvement has other goals and, therefore, is less related to instructional leadership. Since

school leaders play a central role in promoting parental involvement and not all parental involvement activities equally contribute to achieving the school's instructional goals, principals who are expected to become instructional leaders should prioritize academic-oriented parental involvement.

References

- Abbott, A. (2004), *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*, Norton, Chicago, IL.
- Barr, J. and Saltmarsh, S. (2014), "It all comes down to the leadership': the role of the school principal in fostering parent-school engagement", *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership*, Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 491-505.
- Benner, A.D., Boyle, A.E. and Sadler, S. (2016), "Parental involvement and adolescents' educational success: the roles of prior achievement and socioeconomic status", *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Vol. 45 No. 6, pp. 1053-1064.
- Boonk, L., Gijselaers, H.J., Ritzen, H. and Brand-Gruwel, S. (2018), "A review of the relationship between parental involvement indicators and academic achievement", *Educational Research Review*, Vol. 24, pp. 10-30.
- Capstones – The Israeli Institute for School Leadership (2008), *Perception of the Principal's Role in the State of Israel: Report by the Professional Committee to Formulate Policy Recommendations for the Ministry of Education*, Avney Rosha, Jerusalem.
- Capstones – The Israeli Institute for School Leadership (2012), *School Principals as Seen in the Data*, Avney Rosha, Jerusalem.
- Carpenter, B.W., Young, M.D., Bowers, A. and Sanders, K. (2016), "Family involvement at the secondary level: learning from Texas Borderland schools", *NASSP Bulletin*, Vol. 100 No. 1, pp. 47-70.
- Castro, M., Exposito-Casas, E., Lopez-Martin, E., Lizasoain, L., Navarro-Asencio, E. and Gaviria, J.L. (2015), "Parental involvement on student academic achievement: a meta-analysis", *Educational Research Review*, Vol. 14, pp. 33-46.
- Creswell, J.W. and Poth, C.N. (2018), *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Day, C., Gu, Q. and Sammons, P. (2016), "The impact of leadership on student outcomes: how successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 52 No. 2, pp. 221-258.
- Duan, W., Guan, Y. and Bu, H. (2018), "The effect of parental involvement and socioeconomic status on junior school students' academic achievement and school behavior in China", *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 9, p. 952.
- Gedik, S. and Bellibas, M.S. (2015), "Examining schools' distributed instructional leadership capacity: comparison of elementary and secondary schools", *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, Vol. 3 No. 6, pp. 101-110.
- Glickman, C.D., Gordon, S.P. and Ross-Gordon, J.M. (2017), *Supervision and Instructional Leadership: A Developmental Approach*, 10th ed., Pearson, New York, NY.
- Green, C.L., Walker, J.M.T., Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. and Sandler, H.M. (2007), "Parents' motivations for involvement in children's education: an empirical test of a theoretical model of parental involvement", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 99 No. 3, pp. 532-544.
- Hallinger, P. and Murphy, J. (1985), "Assessing the instructional management behavior of principals", *The Elementary School Journal*, Vol. 86 No. 2, pp. 217-247.
- Hallinger, P. and Wang, W.C. (2015), *Assessing Instructional Leadership with the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale*, Springer, Dordrecht.
- Hallinger, P., Gümüş, S. and Bellibaş, M.Ş. (2020), "Are principals instructional leaders yet? A science map of the knowledge base on instructional leadership, 1940-2018", *Scientometrics*, Vol. 122, pp. 1629-1650.

- Hallinger, P. (2012), "A data-driven approach to assess and develop instructional leadership with the PIMRS", in Shen, J. (Ed.), *Tools for Improving Principals' Work*, Peter Lang Publishing, pp. 47-69.
- Heinrichs, J. (2018), "School leadership based in a philosophy and pedagogy of parent engagement", *School Leadership and Management*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 187-201.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. and Sandler, H.M. (1997), "Why do parents become involved in their children's education?", *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 67 No. 1, pp. 3-42.
- Hou, Y., Cui, Y. and Zhang, D. (2019), "Impact of instructional leadership on high school student academic achievement in China", *Asia Pacific Education Review*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 543-558.
- Israeli Ministry of Education (2021a), "Transparency in education", available at: <https://shkifut.education.gov.il/>.
- Israeli Ministry of Education (2021b), "CEO guidelines (Hebrew)", available at: <https://apps.education.gov.il/Mankal/Hodaa.aspx?siduri=243>.
- Jeynes, W.H. (2018), "A practical model for school leaders to encourage parental involvement and parental engagement", *School Leadership and Management*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 147-163.
- Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. (2009), *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2nd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Kwan, P. (2020), "Is transformational leadership theory passé? Revisiting the integrative effect of instructional leadership and transformational leadership on student outcomes", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 56 No. 2, pp. 321-349.
- Malone, D. (2017), "Socioeconomic status: a potential challenge for parental involvement in schools", *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, Vol. 83 No. 3, pp. 58-62.
- Mann, S. (2016), *The Research Interview: Reflective Practice and Reflexivity in Research Processes*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Marschall, M.J. and Shah, P.R. (2020), "Linking the process and outcomes of parent involvement policy to the parent involvement gap", *Urban Education*, Vol. 55 No. 5, pp. 699-729.
- Merriam, S.B. and Tisdell, E.J. (2016), *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed., Jossey-Bass, Hoboken, NJ.
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, M.A. and Saldaña, J. (2014), *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Neumerski, C.M., Grissom, J.A., Goldring, E., Rubin, M., Cannata, M., Schuermann, P. and Drake, T.A. (2018), "Restructuring instructional leadership: how multiple-measure teacher evaluation systems are redefining the role of the school principal", *The Elementary School Journal*, Vol. 119 No. 2, pp. 270-297.
- Ou, S.R. and Reynolds, A.J. (2014), "Early determinants of postsecondary education participation and degree attainment: findings from an inner-city minority cohort", *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 46 No. 4, pp. 474-504.
- Parr, A.K. and Bonitz, V.S. (2015), "Role of family background, student behaviors, and school-related beliefs in predicting high school dropout", *The Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 108 No. 6, pp. 504-514.
- Rossmann, G.B. and Rallis, S.F. (2017), *An Introduction to Qualitative Research: Learning in the Field*, 4th ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Saldaña, J. and Omasta, M. (2018), *Qualitative Research: Analyzing Life*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Shaked, H. (2021), "Between center and periphery: instructional leadership in Israeli rural schools", *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 35 No. 7, pp. 1361-1374.
- Shatzer, R.H., Caldarella, P., Hallam, P.R. and Brown, B.L. (2014), "Comparing the effects of instructional and transformational leadership on student achievement: implications for practice", *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 445-459.

-
- Stronge, J.H., Richard, H.B. and Catano, N. (2008), *Qualities of effective principals*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA.
- Tan, C.Y., Lyu, M. and Peng, B. (2020), "Academic benefits from parental involvement are stratified by parental socioeconomic status: a meta-analysis", *Parenting*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 241-287.
- Tan, C.Y. (2018), "Socioeconomic status, involvement practices, and student science achievement: insights from a typology of home and school involvement patterns", *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 56 No. 3, pp. 899-924.
- Walker, J.M.T., Wilkins, A.S., Dallaire, J.R., Sandler, H.M. and Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. (2005), "Parental involvement: model revision through scale development", *The Elementary School Journal*, Vol. 106 No. 2, pp. 85-104.
- Wang, Y., Deng, C. and Yang, X. (2016), "Family economic status and parental involvement: influences of parental expectation and perceived barriers", *School Psychology International*, Vol. 37 No. 5, pp. 536-553.
- Weber, J. (1989), "Leading the instructional program", in Smith, S.C. and Piele, P.K. (Eds), *School Leadership: Handbook for Excellence*, 2nd ed., ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, pp. 191-224.
- Wehrspann, E., Dotterer, A.M. and Lowe, K. (2016), "The nature of parental involvement in middle school: examining nonlinear associations", *Contemporary School Psychology*, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 193-204.
- Wilder, S. (2014), "Effects of parental involvement on academic achievement: a meta-synthesis", *Educational Review*, Vol. 66 No. 3, pp. 377-397.
- Yulianti, K., Denessen, E., Droop, M. and Veerman, G.J. (2022), "School efforts to promote parental involvement: the contributions of school leaders and teachers", *Educational Studies*, Vol. 48 No. 1, pp. 98-113.

About the author

Prof. Haim Shaked is the President of Hemdat College of Education, Sdot Negev, Israel. As a scholar-practitioner with almost 20 years of experience as a school principal, his research focuses on principalship, and in particular, instructional leadership and system thinking in school leadership. Haim Shaked can be contacted at: haim.shaked@hemdat.ac.il

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com