

# How organizational management supports instructional leadership

Instructional  
leadership

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Previous studies found that principals must be involved in both instructional leadership and organizational management, yet they did not explain how the former supports the latter. To narrow this gap in the available research-based knowledge, the current study explored the contribution of organizational management to instructional leadership.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This study was qualitative in nature. The study participants were 28 principals of elementary schools in Israel. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Data analysis, based on coding, aimed to cluster the eight organizational management functions according to how each function supports instructional leadership.

**Findings** – The present study revealed that the eight functions of organizational management support four main aspects of instructional leadership: (1) Developing a positive learning climate; (2) Improving teaching quality; (3) Realizing the school instructional vision; and (4) Enabling instructional leadership.

**Originality/value** – The findings of this study reinforce the argument that although instructional leadership is the critical component of effective school leadership, it should be supported by other frameworks.

**Keywords** Instructional leadership, Organizational management, School leadership, Principals

**Paper type** Research paper

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## Introduction

Multiple theories and models have been proposed by the research literature on school leadership to describe how principals influence school performance. Of these, instructional leadership has been the most frequently studied conceptual framework in recent decades (Hallinger *et al.*, 2020; Hallinger and Wang, 2015; Shaked, 2023). In instructional leadership, school principals are required to prioritize teaching and learning amelioration and, therefore, to be extensively and directly involved in improving instruction and curriculum (Glickman *et al.*, 2017; Neumerski *et al.*, 2018). The instructional leadership model has been proven to have the most crucial positive impact on student outcomes in different contexts and school levels. Even after controlling other variables, such as student demographics, the principal's instructional leadership is consistently responsible for significant variance in students' academic performance (e.g. Day *et al.*, 2016; Hou *et al.*, 2019; Shatzer *et al.*, 2014).

Without challenging its dominance, several scholars have argued that instructional leadership alone is not enough for principals to bring about school improvement. Although instructional leadership, which expects principals to concentrate on improving teaching and learning, is the central component of effective school leadership, it should be supported by other frameworks that emphasize other aspects of school leadership, such as transformational leadership, which ascribes much importance to inspiration and motivation, and distributed leadership, which advocates sharing leadership and engaging various actors (Halverson and Clifford, 2013; Printy *et al.*, 2009). The argument that principals should combine instructional leadership with other school leadership frameworks led Boyce and Bowers (2018a, p. 197) to claim that: "Recently, educational leadership researchers have extended the concept of instructional leadership into a broader framework of leadership for learning." Leadership for learning merges instructional leadership with several other frameworks of school leadership (Bowers, 2020; Murphy *et al.*, 2007), as explained by Hallinger (2011, p. 126): "While the term 'instructional leadership' originally focused on the



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role of the principal, 'leadership for learning' suggests a broader conceptualization that incorporates . . . additional foci for action."

Notably, scholars assert that instructional leadership should be combined with organizational management, which involves keeping the school running smoothly and ensuring it functions efficiently (Liebowitz and Porter, 2019). "A more holistic view of school leadership as necessitating skills across multiple dimensions, in instruction but also in management of the school as an organization, is important for identifying the ways that principals can promote school improvement" (Grissom and Loeb, 2011, p. 1119). Although the need to supplement instructional leadership with organizational management has gained ground in research (Sebastian *et al.*, 2019), it is not clear yet how exactly organizational management adds to instructional leadership. To narrow this gap in the existing knowledge, the purpose of this study is to explore how organizational management adds to instructional leadership, seeking to answer the following research question: In what ways does organizational management support instructional leadership?

Specifically, this study was conducted in the Israeli education system, which serves approximately 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, 2021). 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, 2022; Capstones – The Israeli Institute for School Leadership, 2008). In this study, Israeli principals were interviewed about the contribution of organizational management to instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership research is vital because the literature in this field demonstrates that instructional leadership provided by principals is essential for student learning and academic results. Specifically, exploring the integration of instructional leadership and other school leadership frameworks is needed as it is "the conceptual evolution" of decades of diverse instructional leadership research (Boyce and Bowers, 2018b, p. 161). Previous studies have offered convincing evidence that effective school leadership integrates instructional leadership with organizational management (Grissom and Loeb, 2011; Liebowitz and Porter, 2019; Sebastian *et al.*, 2019). However, the question of *how* organizational management supports instructional leadership, which holds both theoretical and practical implications, has not been previously discussed in the literature, hence the importance of this study.

### **Theoretical background**

To establish the platform for this study, this section first presents instructional leadership – its meaning, fundamentals, and components. Thereafter it reviews the existing literature on the contribution of organizational management to instructional leadership. This background will enable the exploration of how organizational management supports instructional leadership.

#### *Conceptualization of instructional leadership*

Instructional leadership is an educational leadership approach in which principals are continuously involved in a wide variety of activities aimed at improving teaching and learning for all students (Hallinger *et al.*, 2020). From the perspective of this approach, principals have to prioritize instruction and curriculum while considering everything else to be of lesser importance (Stronge *et al.*, 2008). Above all, they are required to promote the best teaching practices so that students can achieve academic success (Murphy *et al.*, 2016; Neumerski, 2012). The touchstone for this type of leadership includes the principal's ability to stay consistently focused on the core technology of schooling, which is learning, teaching, curriculum, and assessment (Murphy *et al.*, 2007).

Instructional leadership is based on the close connection identified between teachers' quality of instruction and students' academic results (Murphy *et al.*, 2016). Teaching quality may be seen as "one of the most important school-based resources in determining students' future academic success and lifetime outcomes" (Burroughs *et al.*, 2019, p. 7) or even as "the most important variable affecting student achievement, even more so than demographic factors" (Seebruck, 2015, p. 2, emphasis in the original). Thus, instructional leadership claims that the principal's efforts to ensure quality instruction "must be at the heart of the question of how leadership contributes to student learning" (Louis *et al.*, 2010, p. 321).

Decades of research have found that instructional leadership is an effective way to enhance school performance and student achievement (Mitchell *et al.*, 2015). Instructional leadership has been correlated with positive school outcomes, including higher teaching quality and improved student outcomes (O'Donnell and White, 2005; Shatzer *et al.*, 2014). Thus, researchers and practitioners alike expect principals to see instructional leadership as their top responsibility. School principals are required to take on a prominent role as instructional leaders who emphasize the teaching and learning aspects of school leadership and are involved in a wide range of curricular and instructional issues.

Over the years, researchers have tried to understand the meaning of instructional leadership through several frameworks. The most common framework utilized in the instructional leadership research literature (Hallinger and Wang, 2015) was presented by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). It consists of three dimensions that include ten functions. In the first dimension, *defining the school mission*, the principal is expected to ensure a clear mission for the school, which is focused on the academic progress of all students, and share this mission with the school community. That is, this dimension asks the principal to perform two main functions: (1) Framing the school's instructional goals; and (2) Communicating those goals to all necessary parties. In the second dimension, *managing the instructional program*, the principal is required to regulate and control the instructional program. This dimension comprises three primary functions: (3) Coordinating the school's curriculum; (4) Supervising and evaluating instruction; and (5) Monitoring students' progress. In the third dimension, *developing a positive school learning climate*, the principal is expected to create a culture of ongoing improvement as well as high standards and expectations for both students and teachers. This dimension is broken down into five functions for the school principal: (6) Protecting instructional time from threats; (7) Providing incentives to motivate teachers; (8) Providing incentives to encourage students' learning; (9) Promoting staff members' continual professional development; and (10) Maintaining high visibility for quality interactions with teachers and students.

Based on a literature review, Stronge *et al.* (2008) summarized five key elements of instructional leadership: (1) Building and sustaining a school vision that sets clear learning goals and gaining community support for those goals; (2) Sharing leadership by strengthening the expertise of teacher leaders to enhance school performance; (3) Leading a professional learning community that provides meaningful staff development; (4) Using data to make instructional decisions; and (5) Monitoring curriculum and instruction to promote the implementation of quality teaching methods.

Researchers believe that "most principals have a strong intention . . . to engage in the tasks of instructional leadership" (Hallinger and Murphy, 2013, p. 10). This intention, however, is not always realized because of three main inhibitors. First, principals lack sufficient time to be deeply involved in activities aiming to improve teaching and learning. Second, principals have been described as lacking the explicit knowledge base and skill set needed to function as instructional leaders, which refers to which teaching methods are effective in which contexts, how students learn specific subjects, and so forth. Third, deep-seated organizational norms, which see instruction as a domain of teachers alone, push principals away from instructional leadership (Goldring *et al.*, 2015; Murphy *et al.*, 2016; Prytula *et al.*, 2013).

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*The contribution of organizational management to instructional leadership*

The importance of instructional leadership is indisputable (Hallinger *et al.*, 2020; Robinson *et al.*, 2008). But is it enough on its own? Grissom and Loeb (2011), who sought to identify specific skills principals need to promote school success, pointed to the importance of organizational management for school improvement. They found solid evidence for a consistent pattern of positive results for organizational management. These results suggested that organizational management matters for school performance. Thus, they argued against limiting the principal's focus on instructional leadership only at the expense of managing vital organizational functions, such as budgeting and improving campus facilities. Instead, they asserted that effective instructional leadership integrates an understanding of the school's instructional needs with the ability to mobilize resources, employ the best available teachers, and maintain smooth school management. Principals have to be involved not only in teaching and learning matters but also in "traditional" management functions that are not usually included in instructional leadership. "Principals devoting significant energy to becoming instructional leaders—in the narrow sense—are unlikely to see school improvement unless they increase their capacity for Organization Management as well" (Grissom and Loeb, 2011, p. 1119).

It should be noted that although Grissom and Loeb (2011) deal with the integration between instructional "leadership" and organizational "management," they do not seek to repeat the importance of integrating leadership and management in the organization, which is very old in the study of leadership (Bush, 2020). Instead, they seek to expand the principal's areas of focus, addressed through both "leadership" and "management" functions, claiming that to be effective, principals cannot be content with concentrating solely on teaching, learning, and curriculum, as suggested by instructional leadership, but must also pay close attention to various aspects of organizational management.

Sebastian *et al.* (2019) compared principals' perceptions of their instructional leadership relative to their organizational management skills. They found that no principals viewed themselves as strong in instructional leadership but weak in organizational management or vice versa, suggesting that instructional leadership and organizational management were highly related and might both be part of a broader measure of overall leadership effectiveness. Therefore they argued: "If improvements in principal practice can be made to influence student achievement, they need to be devoted to both instructional leadership and organizational management" (Sebastian *et al.*, 2019, p. 15).

Liebowitz and Porter (2019) reviewed the empirical literature from 51 studies to conduct a meta-analysis of the relationships between principal behaviors and student, teacher, and school outcomes. They found that instructional leadership has a unique role in improving outcomes, but it should be combined with non-instructional tasks. They concluded: "In this way, our conclusions are similar to Sebastian *et al.* (2019), who find that principals conceive of their leadership skills unidimensionally across instructional and organizational management, and that these jointly predict stronger student outcome" (Liebowitz and Porter, 2019, p. 814). While the above mentioned studies of Grissom and Loeb (2011) and Sebastian *et al.* (2019) were conducted in the US, Liebowitz and Porter's (2019) meta-analysis also included studies from other high-income, OECD-member countries. Therefore it can be assumed that the contribution of organizational management to instructional leadership is not unique to the US but is also relevant to the Israeli context.

While these studies showed that organizational management is a necessary addition to instructional leadership, they did not explain *why* it is needed. The present study seeks to explain why it is needed by exploring how exactly organizational management supports instructional leadership. Importantly, Grissom and Loeb (2011) measured eight functions of organizational management: (1) *Developing a safe school environment*; (2) *Dealing with concerns from staff*; (3) *Managing budgets and resources*; (4) *Hiring personnel*; (5) *Managing*

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*personal, school-related schedule; (6) Maintaining campus facilities; (7) Managing non-instructional staff; (8) Interacting/networking with other principals.* These functions were utilized in the current study to investigate how organizational management supports instructional leadership.

## Method

Qualitative research methods, which involve asking participants about their experiences of things happening in their lives and thus enabling researchers to understand their perspectives, 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 present study. The following sections describe the sample of this study, gathered information, and analytical strategies.

### *Participants*

Instructional leadership differs between elementary and secondary (middle and high) schools (Gedik and Bellibas, 2015). This difference can be related to different characteristics of the school, such as the fact that elementary school teachers often teach several subjects while secondary school teachers usually teach a single disciplinary subject or that secondary schools are often more crowded than elementary schools (Hallinger, 2012). This study focused on elementary schools.

The sampling for this study was purposive sampling, which selects “information-rich” cases. Indeed, recent research illustrated the greater effectiveness of purposive versus random sampling in qualitative research, supporting related assertions long put forward by qualitative methodologists (van Rijnsoever, 2017). Therefore 12 superintendents from all six Israeli school districts were asked to recommend potential participants whom they see as demonstrating a high level of both instructional leadership and organizational management. The current study sought 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 36 principals. The diversity of study participants was kept in terms of sex, age, experience, and education. Thus, the study included 23 women and 13 men aged 38–61 years old, with a mean age of 49.5. They had 3–26 years of experience as principals, with the average being 10.8 years. Two principals did not have an academic degree, five principals had a bachelor’s degree, 27 principals had a master’s degree, and two had a doctorate. Table 1 presents the information of the study participants.

### *Data collection*

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which explored how organizational management functions may support instructional leadership through questions such as: “What do you think is the connection between students’ safety and their learning?”; “In your opinion, how does addressing staff concerns influence the quality of instruction?”; “From your point of view, how does school budget management relate to teaching and learning?”; “In your view, how may hiring processes help improve teaching quality?”. While the participants were asked to answer predefined questions, the researcher, as an interviewer, changed the order of the questions based on the participants’ answers, encouraged them to expand their answers, and added questions that arose from previous responses. 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 (four follow-up

|    | Pseudonym | Sex    | Age | Principalship experience | Education | District  | School size(no. of students) |
|----|-----------|--------|-----|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------|
| 1  | Albert    | Male   | 43  | 5                        | MA        | Center    | 350                          |
| 2  | Angela    | Female | 58  | 13                       | BA        | North     | 250                          |
| 3  | Anne      | Female | 46  | 11                       | MA        | Center    | 350                          |
| 4  | Alice     | Female | 38  | 6                        | MA        | Jerusalem | 250                          |
| 5  | Barbara   | Female | 50  | 11                       | MA        | Tel Aviv  | 300                          |
| 6  | Betty     | Female | 56  | 15                       | MA        | Jerusalem | 450                          |
| 7  | Carl      | Male   | 52  | 8                        | MA        | Center    | 300                          |
| 8  | Charles   | Male   | 52  | 13                       | MA        | North     | 250                          |
| 9  | David     | Male   | 48  | 9                        | MA        | Jerusalem | 400                          |
| 10 | Deborah   | Female | 55  | 11                       | MA        | Jerusalem | 150                          |
| 11 | Donna     | Female | 39  | 6                        | MA        | Center    | 450                          |
| 12 | Donald    | Male   | 46  | 11                       | MA        | Haifa     | 350                          |
| 13 | Dorothy   | Female | 51  | 18                       | BA        | Jerusalem | 450                          |
| 14 | Elizabeth | Female | 41  | 8                        | MA        | Haifa     | 300                          |
| 15 | Emily     | Female | 49  | 12                       | MA        | North     | 250                          |
| 16 | Ethan     | Male   | 44  | 12                       | MA        | North     | 500                          |
| 17 | Evelyn    | Female | 46  | 11                       | MA        | South     | 300                          |
| 18 | James     | Male   | 48  | 6                        | MA        | Jerusalem | 250                          |
| 19 | Jennifer  | Female | 46  | 16                       | PhD       | South     | 200                          |
| 20 | Jessica   | Female | 55  | 14                       | MA        | Center    | 250                          |
| 21 | John      | Male   | 53  | 19                       | BA        | Tel Aviv  | 400                          |
| 22 | Joseph    | Male   | 45  | 8                        | MA        | South     | 450                          |
| 23 | Kimberly  | Female | 48  | 7                        | MA        | North     | 550                          |
| 24 | Linda     | Female | 51  | 8                        | MA        | Tel Aviv  | 200                          |
| 25 | Mary      | Female | 42  | 5                        | MA        | Haifa     | 350                          |
| 26 | Michael   | Male   | 61  | 19                       | BA        | South     | 300                          |
| 27 | Michelle  | Female | 57  | 13                       | MA        | South     | 300                          |
| 28 | Nancy     | Female | 60  | 18                       | –         | South     | 250                          |
| 29 | Patricia  | Female | 41  | 3                        | MA        | Center    | 500                          |
| 30 | Robert    | Male   | 52  | 9                        | MA        | North     | 300                          |
| 31 | Sarah     | Female | 46  | 7                        | PhD       | Haifa     | 350                          |
| 32 | Sandra    | Female | 49  | 7                        | MA        | Center    | 650                          |
| 33 | Sharon    | Female | 50  | 9                        | MA        | Jerusalem | 400                          |
| 34 | Susan     | Female | 54  | 14                       | BA        | Tel Aviv  | 150                          |
| 35 | Thomas    | Male   | 50  | 11                       | MA        | Haifa     | 250                          |
| 36 | William   | Male   | 60  | 16                       | –         | Jerusalem | 200                          |

**Table 1.**  
Study participants' information

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 leave the study at any time (no one left). It was made clear to them that the superintendent who recommended them as possible 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.

#### *Data analysis*

Data analysis began with 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 stage was designed to look for statements related in some way to the contribution of organizational management to

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instructional leadership. The identified statements were linked to the functions of organizational management. This stage was theory-driven (Rossman and Rallis, 2012) because the researcher used Grissom and Loeb's (2011) eight functions of organizational management (mentioned above). Then, each identified statement was given a code representing the specific contribution to instructional leadership (Creswell and Poth, 2018). For example: "Renovating inappropriate facilities supports pedagogical concepts"; "Teacher selection supports high achievement"; "Budget management supports realizing the instructional vision"; and "principals' meetings provide instructional knowledge." This stage was data-driven and not theory-driven because the researcher did not use *a priori* codes but rather inductive codes developed by directly examining the data (Saldaña and Omasta, 2018; Rossman and Rallis, 2012). Following this, based on the codes given in the previous stage, the eight functions of Grissom and Loeb (2011) were clustered according to how each organizational management function supports instructional leadership. This stage 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). The four clusters found in this stage formed the basis for the categories presented in the findings chapter.

## Findings

The present study explored how organizational management supports instructional leadership. Data analysis suggested that for the participating principals, the eight organizational management functions (mentioned above) support four main aspects of instructional leadership: The functions of (1) *Developing a safe school environment* and (6) *Maintaining campus facilities* support the aspect of *Developing a positive learning climate*. The functions of (2) *Dealing with concerns from staff* and (4) *Hiring personnel* support the aspect of *Improving teaching quality*. The functions of (3) *Managing budgets and resources* and (7) *Managing non-instructional staff* support the aspect of *Realizing the school instructional vision*. The functions of (5) *Managing personal, school-related schedule* and (8) *Interacting with other principals* support the aspect of *Enabling instructional leadership*. The findings are presented next, supported by participants' comments.

### *Developing a positive learning climate*

Developing a positive learning climate is one of the three dimensions of instructional leadership identified by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). According to the study participants, two organizational management functions support this aspect of instructional leadership: (1) *Developing a safe school environment* and (6) *Maintaining campus facilities*.

*Developing a safe school environment.* Interviews with 24 principals who participated in this study revealed that they saw their work to develop a safe school environment contributing to the development of a positive learning climate. When principals mentioned their work to create a safe environment, they described themselves as setting policies, designing schoolwide programs, implementing effective practices in the school, and supporting the teachers.

The participating principals asserted that students who felt unsafe at school had a more challenging time paying attention and concentrating in the classroom. Deborah said: "It is important to me that students feel safe when traveling to and from school and inside the classrooms, cafeterias, toilets, and schoolyards because you can not learn when you do not feel safe." Deborah went on to claim: "If we do not fulfill their basic need for safety, then learning cannot occur. Students will be distracted and have a reduced concentration span and lack of focus." For Deborah, when students feel safe and secure, they can better focus on learning and have better opportunities to succeed academically. Thus, creating a violence-free school contributes to the healthy academic development of students.

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In addition, the participating principals claimed that their work to prevent school violence increases student attendance. Jennifer said: "There is a link between school safety and absences. When we do not provide safety for the students, they may stop showing up." Jennifer believed that student attendance is closely related to a variety of educational outcomes. However, personal victimization directly leads to students missing school due to a fear of violence and their perceptions of the magnitude of the problem of school violence. Preventing school violence may improve student attendance and, therefore, student learning and achievement.

The participating principals also argued that a safe environment allowed them to attract and retain good teachers. Sharon aspired to make her school the kind of place where effective teachers want to stay. She explained: "Teachers like to work in a school that effectively deals with violence in particular and discipline in general. Great teachers do not leave my school." Sharon identified school violence as a barrier to keeping good teachers. For her, a safe environment was a proven strategy for increasing the retention rate of these teachers.

*Maintaining campus facilities.* Analysis of the interview data showed that 14 of the participating principals understood their role in maintaining school facilities as more than just aesthetics or resource management. For them, it was about creating a physical setting that contributes to a positive learning climate.

These participating principals believed that their work to improve the school facilities impacts the learning climate. David asserted: "A classroom with peeling paint or broken windows doesn't promote student learning." Michelle similarly argued: "Our aging school buildings, which are really in need of repair, make it difficult to cultivate the joy of learning. We need to invest in replacing old facilities." For David and Michelle, the learning climate depends not only on the quality of teaching but also on the physical environment. When the environment is not pleasant, even high-quality teaching will have difficulty creating a positive learning atmosphere.

Principals asserted that the school's physical conditions should increase students' desire to be in school and show the value of education. As mentioned above, they believed student attendance is associated with various educational outcomes. For them, one of the factors that increase the desire to be absent from school is when the building is not clean, not well-kept, and not pleasant. Moreover, they wanted the maintenance of the school building to convey respect for the students and their learning. Elizabeth contended: "When the school is an impressive building, it conveys to the children that we value education."

From the participating principals' perspective, school facilities should adapt to contemporary models of teaching and learning and reflect the school's instructional mission. Jessica explained: "The first step in renovating inadequate facilities is producing a pedagogical idea that will be the starting point for designing the space. We decided not to place seating areas in the corridors, but rather tables for individual learning, so that the corridors would be used not only for rest but also for learning." James said: "Based on our school vision, the classrooms were designed to allow one-on-one meetings between student and teacher, working in small groups, and gatherings of the plenum."

#### *Improving teaching quality*

Improving the quality of teaching is at the heart of instructional leadership. Principals as instructional leaders should "become the leaders in the teaching-learning process" (Siu, 2008, p. 156). This study's participants viewed two functions of organizational management as supporting this aspect of instructional leadership: (2) *Dealing with concerns from staff* and (4) *Hiring personnel* support the aspect of *Improving teaching quality*.

*Dealing with concerns from staff.* Qualitative data suggested that 19 of the principals who participated in this study considered dealing with concerns from staff to be connected to



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improving teaching quality. These principals emphasized those concerns that were closely related to teaching.

The participating principals pointed out a wide range of concerns raised by the staff related to teaching with which they dealt. Patricia described equipment concerns: "During COVID-19, the teachers asked for headphones with a microphone attachment for online teaching. I bought it for them because it enables them to do their job better." William noted schedule concerns: "A teacher wanted to teach math at earlier hours, and I agreed because it was really more effective." Albert mentioned available time concerns: "Some teachers asked to cancel meetings so that they would have more time to plan instruction. I agreed because effective planning can't always be done at home. Teachers need more structured planning time in their days." Dorothy referred to placing concerns: "I fulfilled a teacher's request to change to another grade level because she was really better suited for a different age level of students." These principals believed their contribution to quality teaching and learning is often indirect. They can improve instruction not only through leadership activities that take place inside the classrooms but also in the organization that surrounds the classroom, creating conditions that influence what goes on inside the classrooms.

These participating principals also described themselves as responding to staff concerns related to teaching which were not explicitly stated. Identifying these concerns was based on a close principal-teacher relationship. For study participants, the relational nature of the school leader role cannot be ignored because almost every task assigned to a school principal requires some degree of relational behavior. Donna mentioned appreciation: "The teachers did not directly ask me to express more appreciation, but they really, really need to receive recognition or praise for doing good work. It allows them to continue investing in teaching." Sarah referred to support: "All teachers go through difficult times at some point in their lives. I show them support during this time, thus enabling them to continue to fulfill their teaching duties."

*Hiring personnel.* Data analysis indicated that 23 of the principals who participated in this study saw their responsibility to hire good teachers as an essential component of improving teaching quality. From their perspective, ensuring that the right teachers are recruited is a prerequisite for improving teaching quality.

These study participants viewed teacher recruitment and selection as critical to their efforts to promote teaching and learning. Improving the teaching quality of the teachers already working in the school is not enough; it is also imperative to choose the right people. Carl said: "The best way to improve student learning and results is to improve teachers, and the best way to improve teachers is through a good choice." He went on to say: "A wise selection of teachers is necessary for high-achieving students." Emily attached much importance to teacher selection because "hiring the right teachers can make or break a school." However, with regard to the broader question of who should be considered the "right" person for the job of a teacher, the participating principals emphasized the challenge and complexity involved in such decisions. Although they were consistently engaged in screening teacher candidates and evaluating inservice teachers, they found it difficult to define and characterize the desired teacher. Moreover, they perceived the process of selecting new teachers as providing only limited predictive information about teachers' capability.

The participating principals also emphasized the question of which teachers would teach which subjects in which classrooms, which for them could significantly influence student learning and success. They asked themselves questions such as whether it was better for one teacher to teach all disciplines or whether it was preferable to have a different teacher for each field of knowledge, and whether it was better for students to have one teacher in each lesson or whether models of co-teaching were preferred. They also tried to improve the quality of teaching and learning by optimally matching each teacher with the appropriate field of knowledge and age group.

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In addition, they have made great efforts to fire weak teachers. From their perspective, the quality of the teacher matters more than the class size, the textbook, or even the curriculum, and therefore the dismissal of ineffective teachers, who adversely affect student achievement, is an important goal. John explained: "Although most teachers are effective, there is a small percentage of teachers who are unable or unwilling to make the necessary steps to improve their instruction. I simply don't want them in my school." The principals dealt with dismissing weak teachers despite the interpersonal discomfort involved. When teachers were harming students with poor instruction, principals felt morally and professionally obligated to terminate their employment at the school.

### *Realizing the school instructional vision*

The school's instructional vision is a critical component of instructional leadership (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985). The current study's participants argued that two functions of organizational management help in actualizing the school instructional vision: (3) *Managing budgets and resources* and (7) *Managing non-instructional staff*.

*Managing budgets and resources.* Interviews conducted for this qualitative study illustrated how 17 of the principals perceived their budget management as closely related to the school's instructional vision. Betty said: "The budget plan and the educational plan cannot be separated from each other. Ultimately, the budget plan is designed to enable the educational plan." Robert asserted that the school budget should reflect the school instructional plan: "A school budget helps bridge the gap that can exist between the instructional goals and the school reality."

These participating principals claimed that as principals, they have to ensure that the budget is used to fund effective instructional programs. Linda stated: "How resources are allocated is critical for ensuring a high-quality education. We need to spend our money on educational initiatives that can make a difference." Similarly, Nancy said: "The budget process forces choices between different programs that compete for the limited resources available. Strategic budgeting means that we use resources effectively to improve student learning and success."

These participating principals argued that more money might allow for better teaching and learning. Therefore, they made efforts to increase the school's revenue. Michael said: "More money does make a difference, provided that we spend it correctly. Thus, I not only make the most of the funding available to me but also try to generate additional income." He added: "I know how to make extra money for my school, which is used to improve teaching and learning." Michael believed that although money alone is not the answer to all educational challenges, students benefited from an increased school budget. Thus he did not concentrate only on improving teaching and learning in the classrooms but also on obtaining additional budgets, which would allow more teaching resources to be provided to students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

*Managing non-instructional staff.* Nine of the participating principals said during the interviews that the management of the non-instructional staff contributed to the implementation of the school's instructional vision. They referred mainly to the clerical support staff, ascribing importance to this staff's understanding of the instructional vision.

As mentioned above, Robert claimed that the school budget should reflect the school improvement plan. As the secretary managed the school's budget, he clarified his instructional priorities to her: "I made sure she understood that I want to save the money for instructional goals. Instead of spending money on extra-academic activities, she tried to save money so we could invest in instructional needs." Similarly, Jessica, mentioned above, said that they decided not to place seating areas in the corridors but instead tables for individual learning. She described how this decision was made: "The secretary and I met with

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the chosen designer. The secretary sat there because she managed the budget but explained to the designer no less well than me that student learning was the most important thing to us.” These principals did not treat the clerical support staff as unrelated to the instructional goals of the school but rather as part of a holistic improvement of teaching and learning. They believed in the ability of the clerical support staff to understand the instructional goals of the school and contribute to the creation of the organizational conditions necessary to accomplish them.

These participating principals expected the assistants of students with special needs to help, not only in terms of the student’s physical limitations but also to address their students’ academic needs. They wanted everyone in the school, especially those within the classrooms, to contribute to the teaching effort. Barbara explained: “I want the assistants to be a learning aid which, beyond their narrow role, also helps students progress in their studies.” They also did not allow the maintenance person to enlist the help of students because they believed in protecting the sanctity of students’ classroom time, conveying a clear message that students are supposed to engage solely in learning.

### *Enabling instructional leadership*

Principals who aspire to be instructional leaders need both available time and relevant knowledge (Goldring *et al.*, 2015; Murphy *et al.*, 2016). As to the present study’s participants, two functions of organizational management support this aspect of instructional leadership: (5) *Managing personal, school-related schedule* and (8) *Interacting with other principals*.

*Managing personal, school-related schedule.* Interviews with 16 of the participating principals revealed that they saw the management of their personal, school-related schedules as enabling them to manage the instructional program. They felt they lacked sufficient time to engage directly in attempts to improve teaching and learning and argued that effective time management was essential for them to be able to coordinate the curriculum and supervise instruction.

These participating principals claimed that instructional leadership often conflicted with tasks involved in the day-to-day management of schools. They described ongoing structural limits on their time that pressured them to attend to other issues. Alice said: “My average workday is often broken into small, separate parts. If I do not organize and plan how to divide my time, I will not be able to find the uninterrupted blocks of time needed to improve the curriculum.” Similarly, Joseph argued: “Much of my time is spent on unplanned and crisis-oriented issues. I must develop my ability to use my time productively.”

Principals felt that they were devoting too little time to instructional matters; Instead, their work was dominated by issues unrelated to teaching and learning and characterized by an unpredictable flow of tasks with an emphasis on immediately urgent priorities. They noted various strategies they employed to find time for instructional leadership. For example, Kimberly mentioned a set list of tasks: “Before I leave work for the day, I create a to-do list for the next day, which always includes tasks related to teaching quality. If my mind is distracted, a quick glance at my list reminds me of what observations I have to do.” Mary said she reserved time in advance to observe classes: “I block time devoted to observing lessons and do not allow it to be touched. Otherwise, it will not happen.”

*Interacting/networking with other principals.* Interviews with 16 of the principals revealed that they perceived networking with other principals as a way to acquire the knowledge necessary to apply instructional improvement. Interactions with colleagues involved searching for information and tips about curriculum and best teaching practices and an opportunity to think about instructional challenges from a different perspective.

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These participating principals mentioned various opportunities for interacting with other principals about curriculum and instruction. For example, Ethan utilized principals' meetings: "When I go to principals' meetings, what matters to me is not the meetings themselves, but the conversations with other principals, where I hear many important things about teaching methods, learning materials, etc." Evelyn went with other members of her school's senior management team to visit other schools to see pedagogical processes: "These visits are very significant. You learn a lot about what can be done to improve teaching and learning." Principals believed that instructional leadership required not only good relationships with school staff, but also with stakeholders from the outside-school world. Good relationships with principals of other schools allowed principals to gather information about teaching methods, learning materials, and related issues.

Particularly, these participating principals interacted with peers from the same district. Sandra said: "We consult with each other regarding new curricula, external achievement tests, and more." Susan nurtured relationships mostly with principals she thought were experts. She said: "As a relatively new principal, I have identified those principals who understand best what exactly is required of us, and I ask them about many pedagogical issues." Donald said: "Principals work mostly in isolation, especially when things are not going well. I need someone who, without explanation, understands what I'm experiencing and can offer me not only support but also ideas on how to turn around disappointing outcomes." Their relationships with peers from the same district were characterized by "coopetition," a neologism describing a combination of competition with cooperation. Principals competed with each other for students and academic achievement but cooperated in the transfer of instructional information. For them, instructional leadership does not stop at the school boundary. Instructional leadership involves not only an internal focus on internal processes of teaching and learning but also a significant outward focus, searching for external innovative instructional knowledge.

## Discussion

This study, which inquired into how organizational management contributes to instructional leadership, revealed the mechanisms through which organizational management supports instructional leadership. While previous studies (Grissom and Loeb, 2011; Liebowitz and Porter, 2019; Sebastian *et al.*, 2019) found that organizational management adds to instructional leadership, they did not explain why precisely organizational management is needed alongside instructional leadership. The current study answers this question by identifying the four specific aspects of instructional leadership supported by organizational management functions.

First, organizational management bolsters the development of a positive learning climate. A steady stream of literature has highlighted the role of principals as instructional leaders in cultivating an environment that encourages learning (Cherkowski, 2016). Developing a positive learning climate, which is correlated with various desired outcomes for teachers and students (Shoshani and Eldor, 2016), is one of the three dimensions of Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) framework of instructional leadership. According to this study's findings, two functions of organizational management were perceived by principals as related to the development of a positive learning climate: (1) developing a safe school environment and (6) maintaining campus facilities. From the study participants' perspective, these functions are necessary to enable students to be intellectually engaged because an unsafe environment and unmaintained facilities may become barriers to student learning.

Second, organizational management helps in improving teaching quality. Although principals as instructional leaders are central figures in promoting high academic achievement levels for students, their influence on students is mainly indirect, mediated

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primarily through teachers' teaching strategies (Gurr *et al.*, 2010). Principals who enact instructional leadership ensure that teachers take full advantage of instructional time for effective, high-quality teaching (Murphy *et al.*, 2016). The participants of this study viewed two functions of organizational management as relevant to improving teaching quality: (2) *Dealing with concerns from staff* and (4) *Hiring personnel*. They aspired to meet teachers' instructional needs and considered recruiting and selecting new teachers as means to improve teaching and learning.

Third, organizational management assists in realizing the school's instructional vision. Building, sustaining, mobilizing support for, and applying a school vision that sets clear learning goals are crucial responsibilities of instructional leaders (Stronge *et al.*, 2008). A shared vision emerged as a prominent mediator between principals' instructional leadership and school outcomes (Qadach *et al.*, 2020). The principals who participated in this study pointed to two organizational management functions that help in actualizing the school's instructional vision: (3) *Managing budgets and resources* and (7) *Managing non-instructional staff*. These two functions were considered by the study participants as a means of turning the vision into an everyday reality through strategic management of resources and with the help of the non-instructional staff.

Fourth, organizational management provides the resources needed to implement instructional leadership. Instructional leadership application often conflicts with the tasks involved in the day-to-day management of schools. Thus, principals are said to lack sufficient time to be directly involved in efforts to improve teaching and learning (Goldring *et al.*, 2015; Prytula *et al.*, 2013). In addition, many of a principal's activities aimed at promoting improved teaching methods and student achievement, such as setting instructional goals, having a dialogue with teachers about the quality of teaching, and monitoring what is being taught, when, and how, are virtually impossible without knowledge of how to create and facilitate effective teaching and learning environments (Lochmiller and Acker-Hocevar, 2016; Quebec Fuentes and Jimerson, 2020). The principals who participated in this study believed that two organizational management functions make it easier for principals to demonstrate instructional leadership: (5) *Managing personal, school-related schedule* and (8) *Interacting with other principals*. These two functions provide available time and relevant knowledge, which are enablers of instructional leadership application.

Figure 1 illustrates the eight organizational management functions that support four main aspects of instructional leadership: The functions of (1) *Developing a safe school environment* and (6) *Maintaining campus facilities* support the aspect of *Developing a positive learning climate*. The functions of (2) *Dealing with concerns from staff* and (4) *Hiring personnel* support the aspect of *Improving teaching quality*. The functions of (3) *Managing budgets and resources* and (7) *Managing non-instructional staff* support the aspect of *Realizing the school instructional vision*. The functions of (5) *Managing personal, school-related schedule* and (8) *Interacting with other principals* support the aspect of *Enabling instructional leadership*.

Overall, the current study joins previous studies (Grissom and Loeb, 2011; Liebowitz and Porter, 2019; Sebastian *et al.*, 2019), which found that organizational management contributes to instructional leadership, and goes on to explain what this contribution is based on. In this context, this study advocates viewing instructional leadership and organizational management through the "both/and" approach, which suggests employing different educational leadership frameworks simultaneously by leveraging the advantages of each option separately and building on their synergistic potential, rather than the "either/or" approach, in which principals evaluate the pros and cons of different educational leadership frameworks and then make tough decisions about them in ways such as the "tradeoff," in which leaders choose between alternatives, or the "compromise," which is based on concessions on all sides (Lewis *et al.*, 2014).



**Figure 1.**  
The eight organizational management functions that support four main aspects of instructional leadership

Thus, this study reinforces the argument that instructional leadership should be combined with other frameworks and functions of school leadership (Halverson and Clifford, 2013; Printy *et al.*, 2009). From this perspective, principals should not prioritize only the improvement of teaching and learning while considering other school issues to be of lesser importance (Murphy *et al.*, 2016; Stronge *et al.*, 2008). Although instructional leadership is a key framework for principals, they must also recognize the role that other aspects of school leadership play in supporting instructional leadership. This argument led to the formulation of the leadership for learning framework, which is claimed to be “the conceptual evolution” of decades of diverse instructional leadership research (Boyce and Bowers, 2018b, p. 161). Leadership for learning integrates instructional leadership with other frameworks of school leadership, including organizational management (Boyce and Bowers, 2018a; Hallinger, 2011; Murphy *et al.*, 2007). The current study identified the ways in which organizational management supports instructional leadership, showing the benefits of integrating instructional leadership with other frameworks and functions of school leadership (Bowers, 2020; Hallinger, 2011). Thus, this study illustrates how principals who stay consistently focused on the core technology of schooling, which is learning, teaching,

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curriculum, and assessment, also make other dimensions of school leadership work in the service of more robust core technology and improved school performance and student results.

Practically, this study's findings encourage school principals to focus their efforts on organizational management as an adjunct to instructional leadership, becoming instructional leaders who also pay attention to organizational management functions. In addition, it seems advisable to discuss the importance of the connection between organizational management and instructional leadership 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.

Compared to existing research, this study provides new data on how organizational management supports instructional leadership. However, it has several limitations. First, the findings were collected within the Israeli context, so 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 involved principals of elementary schools only. Future research could explore the contribution of organizational management to instructional leadership in principals from a variety of school levels. Third, 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. Fourth, this study did not identify a correlation between the principals' statements and their characteristics, such as gender, experience, and education. Such differences may be found in a study using a more significant number of participants.

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