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*Full Length Research Paper*

# Instructional leadership behaviors: the case of Lebanese private school principals

Norma Ghamrawi and Khalil Al-Jammal

Faculty of Education- Lebanese University

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**The purpose of this study was to investigate the degree private school principals in Greater Beirut Area served as instructional leaders. 202 principals participated in this study through the completion of the *Instructional Leadership Behavior of School Principals (ILBSP)* developed by researchers based on Hallingers' framework of instructional leadership. Data was analyzed using SPSS 22.0 for windows. Results indicate that the relationships of school leadership with instruction and learning were weak. Recommendations for future studies and practice are offered.**

**Keywords:** instructional leadership- school leadership- school improvement- school effectiveness

## INTRODUCTION

Copious studies spanning the past three decades link high-quality leadership with positive school outcomes (Cotton, 2003; Goodwin et al., 2003; Tucker, 2003; Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008). More than ever before, principals are increasingly considered as corner stones for any successful school endeavors (Cotton, 2003; Goodwin et al., 2003). They are under ever-increasing pressure to improve student achievement (Thornton and Perreault, 2002). In this line, three leadership practices are commonly referenced in the literature: (a) focusing school's mission and goals, (b) promoting and safeguarding trust and collaboration across the school, and (c) actively supporting instruction (Hallinger, 2005; Supovitz, Sirinides, and May, 2010). When school principals play a role in shaping the instruction delivered in their schools, they are said to be exhibiting an instructional leadership role (Tucker, 2003).

Research clearly indicates that instructional leadership is a strong attribute of effective schools (Lezotte, 1991). High performing schools are characterized with

principals who act out as strong instructional leaders (Tucker, 2003; Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008). Such principals have been found to affect the type of instruction that teachers use in their classrooms (Blasé and Blase, 1998; Blasé and Roberts, 1994; King, 1991; Sheppard, 1996; Smith and Andrews, 1989). They bear the responsibility for developing instructional strategies to ensure the success of all children along with their staff (Franklin, 1994).

Besides, research has shown that principals who demonstrate instructional leadership behaviors often result in more teacher commitment and satisfaction, as well as establish a climate conducive of trust, collaboration and one in which teachers reflect tendency to be more risk-takers (Larson-Knight, 2000; Blasé and Blase, 1998, 1999; Sheppard, 1996). Many of these factors have been identified in the literature to promote school improvement (Ghamrawi, 2010; 2011).

Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010) consider instructional leadership behaviors of school principals to be essential for the creation and sustainability of professional learning communities. Such communities have been described in the literature to energize teachers to play an active role in promoting academic rigor within the school (Johnson, Livingston,

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\*Corresponding author Email:  
dr.norma\_ghamrawi@hotmail.com

Schwartz, and Slate, 2000). Schools characterized with professional learning communities have been identified in the literature to ensure the learning of all of its students (Ghamrawi, 2013).

In short, instructional leadership is a strong approach that school principals can take so that the instruction that their students receive in classrooms is of good quality. The purpose of this study was to investigate the instructional leadership behaviors exhibited by private school principals in Beirut.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree private school principals in Beirut exhibited instructional leadership roles and responsibilities in their schools.

The research question that served as the focus for the research study was the following:

What instructional leadership roles and responsibilities are performed by private school principals in Beirut?

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **The Scope of Principalship**

Chapman (2000) classifies the scope of role of principals into four zones. The first one relates to school management, which entails ordering supplies, ensuring teachers are hired and assigned, gathering information, and maintain basic record keeping. The second zone includes the ministerial work principals perform so as to ensure that legal aspects of the school are in place. This largely consists of completing required reports. The third zone describes the role that principals carry out to ensure effective relationships with the school community. This makes them get involved with community councils, community development associations, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), parent groups, and other local organizations that have interest in the schools. The goal is often to encourage community support of the school such as by gaining donations for facilities construction and maintenance or teacher subsidies. Finally, instructional supervision is the fourth zone in which principals impact the quality of teaching and hence student learning in their schools. Unfortunately, in many cases, the fourth zone is the one that is least catered for by principals and is often left for subject coordinators if ever addressed in the school (Chapman, 2000).

#### **Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leadership is distinguished as key for successful school principals (Hoy and Hoy, 2009). It refers to all activities that they carry out leaving impact on

curriculum and instruction (Hallinger, 2003). Silins, Mulford and Zarins (2002), Mulford and Silins (2003), and Bishop (2004) provide evidence and models which trace the impact of the principal's instructional leadership on student outcomes. In the same vein, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, and Hopkins (2006) assert that: "[instructional] leadership has very significant effects on the quality of school organization and on pupil learning" (p.5). According to Hill (2002) for schools to improve student outcomes, principals need to dedicate more time to establishing preconditions and interventions directed at improving teaching and learning, and reduce time devoted to administrative and managerial roles. They actually need to be leaders *in* learning, rather than just leaders *of* learning (Munro, 2002). This may not be realized, unless those principals remain current with latest learning theories (Munro, 2002).

Lunenburg and Irby (2006) illustrate that school principals display instructional leadership behaviors in their schools by: (1) focusing on learning, (2) encouraging collaboration, (3) using data to improve learning, (4) providing support, and (5) aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Taken together, these five scopes of instructional leadership provide a compelling framework for accomplishing sustained success for all children (Fullan, 2010; Lunenburg and Carr, 2003; Marzano and Waters, 2010).

*1. Focus on Learning:* According to DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) school leaders play a vital role in prioritizing learning in their settings. They can do so by posing set of questions on school members that in effect shifts inquiry, preparation and collaboration from teaching to learning; and hence rendering school motto into one that stresses on what students are expected to learn and be able to do rather than what teachers are supposed to teach.

*2. Encouraging Collaboration:* DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Karhanek (2010) suggest that instructional leaders help shift the focus in their schools from teaching to learning by establishing a task force for student learning amongst their teachers. Principals must work to ensure that teacher expectations are aligned with the school's instructional goal and to eliminate teacher isolation so that discussions about student learning become a collective mission of the school (Elmore, 2005; Senge, 2001, 2006). However this may not be achieved unless principals build, nurture and sustain a school culture that is conducive to collaboration (English, 2008; Northouse, 2010).

*3. Using Data to Improve Learning:* Instructional leaders ensure an effective utilization of student results to improve learning (Blankstein, Houston, and Cole, 2010; Love, 2009). They do so by breaking down such results by specific objectives and target levels in the school curriculum; and thus connect what is taught to what is learned. Principals also encourage teachers to have access to longitudinal data on each student in their

**Table 1** Hallinger's (1983; 2003) Domains of Instructional Leadership

Domain 1	<i>Defining school mission</i>
	(a) framing School goals
	(b) communicating the school goals
Domain 2	<i>Managing the instructional program</i>
	(a) supervising and evaluating instruction
	(b) coordinating the curriculum
	(c) monitoring student progress
Domain 3	<i>Promoting a positive school learning climate</i>
	(a) protecting instructional time
	(b) maintaining high visibility
	(c) providing incentives for teachers
	(d) promoting professional development
	(e) providing incentives for learning

classroom and make the appropriate analysis. Hand-in-hand with their school principals, teachers' analysis would be used to develop individual and small-group education plans for their students to ensure mastery of areas of weakness from previous years while also moving students forward in the school curriculum (Love, 2009).

4. *Providing Support:* Downey, Steffy, Poston, and English (2009) assure that instructional leaders provide teachers with all the support including training and tools to aid them in handling all instructional matters especially those that relate to assessment of student learning and utilizing results to diagnose learning gaps. In the same vein Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) argue instructional leaders play a role in supporting teachers using technology, facilitating professional networks, and manipulating teachers' schedules in a fashion that enable them to find common time for collaborating together for the benefit of students.

5. *Aligning Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment:* Instructional leaders bear the mission of rendering school curricula inviting to students (English, 2000). They do so by enriching such curricula based on the analytical data they obtain with their teachers on student results. Then through teacher collaboration, collective discussions across the school both longitudinally as well as horizontally; instructional leaders ensure that curricula and instruction are aligned (Popham, 2010).

Parallel to the previous instructional leadership model, Hallinger (1983; 2008) provides a very systematic description of three leadership domains that school principals would act within so that they exhibit an instructional leadership role. These domains were used to develop the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale* (PIRMS) which was widely used in several studies. The three domains and sub-domains appear in table 1.

In conclusion, instructional leadership is a very promising tool for improving schools. The behaviors of principals who exhibit an instructional leadership role should not be seen narrowly through the lens of classroom activities solely but rather through the wider spectrum through which principals impact learning

indirectly as well.

## METHOD

### The Sample

202 school principals from 202 private K-12 schools in Beirut, Lebanon participated in the study. In fact, the researcher invited 334 private K-12 schools in Greater Beirut Area to take part in the study via a letter that detailed the purpose of the study, data collection tool, how data was going to be treated and guarantees of anonymity of participant schools. In addition a copy of the survey instrument was sent to schools. Only 236 schools completed and returned back the questionnaire to the researcher, out of which 202 were usable as many were not fully completed and were mistakenly completed. In other words, the sample represents 60.5% of the total population of private schools in Greater Beirut Area.

### Research Instrument

This study is non-experimental descriptive research that aimed at collecting a general portrait for the status quo of instructional leadership within the Lebanese context. Data were collected via 'Instructional Leadership Behavior of School Principals' (ILBSP) which was developed by the researchers based on Hallinger's (1983; 2008) three domains of instructional leadership that were introduced earlier. The instrument was validated by 3 experts in Educational Leadership and was piloted with 17 public school principals. The Reliability Consistency Coefficient was determined using pilot study scores and was found to be 0.75 using Chronbach Alpha Coefficient.

ILBSP consisted of two parts. The first part collected demographic information about participants. The second part of the survey consisted of 44 items that were presented in a forced choice scale of four categories (Likert Scale) with response items that ranged from "1 = I

**Table 2** Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	%
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	41.8
Female	58.2
<i>Age (Years)</i>	
Less than 25	0.0
26-35	5.6
36-45	28.9
46 and above	49.6
<i>Teaching Experience (Years)</i>	
Less than 4	0.0
5-9	10.9
10- 14	23.1
15- 19	22.9
20 and above	32.7
<i>Highest Degree Held</i>	
Bachelors (Faculty of Education Graduates)	25.2
Bachelors (Graduated from faculties other than Education)	57.3
Masters	20.4
PhD	3.1

**Table 3a** Instructional Leadership Practices of School Principals (Domain 1)

D	Instructional Leadership Practices	<i>Never Do</i>	<i>Sometimes Do</i>	<i>Frequently Do</i>	<i>Always Do</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1a	1 I develop school wide goals annually	3 1.4%	89 44.0%	43 21.2%	67 33.1%	2.86 71.1%	.011
	2 I develop annual school goals with teachers	101 5.0%	31 15.3%	42 20.7%	28 13.8%	1.98 49.9%	0.014
	3 I use student results in developing goals	36 17.8%	63 31.1%	73 36.1%	30 14.8%	2.48 62.2%	.0211
	4 I make school goals visible to school community as a whole	53 26.2%	67 33.1%	43 21.2%	39 19.3%	2.33 58.9%	.111
	<i>Grand Mean Score for 1a</i>					2.4 60.1%	
1b	5 I discuss school goals with teachers	115 56.9%	47 23.3%	33 16.3%	7 3.4%	1.66 41.1%	.213
	6 I refer to school goals when discussing curriculum with teachers	51 25.2%	47 23.3%	67 33.1%	37 18.3%	2.44 61.1%	.123
	7 I refer to school goals when planning for extra-curricular activities with teachers	96 47.5%	36 17.8%	51 25.2%	19 9.4%	1.96 49.9%	.320
	<i>Grand Mean Score for 1b</i>					2.02 50.0%	
	<i>Grand Mean Score for Domain 1</i>					2.21 55.0%	

never do this task to “4= I do this every day.” The items developed per each domain and sub-domain of Hallinger (1983; 2008) is represented in table 3.

from the respondents. Means scores, standard deviations and percentages were calculated per each item of the survey instrument.

**Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed using SPSS 18.0 for windows. Descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarize the properties of the mass of data collected

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Demographic Data**

Part I of ILBSP collected demographic information about

**Table 3b** Instructional Leadership Practices of School Principals (Domain 2)

D	Instructional Leadership Practices		Never Do	Sometimes Do	Frequently Do	Always Do	M	SD
2a	8	I attend classes and ensure that teaching is aligned with school goals	115 56.9%	43 21.2%	41 20.2%	3 1.4%	1.66 41.9%	.311
	9	I attend classes and ensure that students acquire basic skills	121 59.9%	41 20.2%	38 18.8%	2 0.9%	1.60 40.9%	.214
	10	I attend classes and conduct chats with students about their learning	167 82.6%	29 14.3%	1 .49%	5 2.4%	1.22 30.9%	.001
	11	I precede classes that I attend by pre-observation conferences with teachers	177 87.6%	21 10.3%	2 0.9%	2 0.9%	1.15 28.9%	.221
	12	I follow-up classes that I attend by post-observation conferences with teachers	109 53.9%	43 21.2%	21 10.3%	29 14.3%	1.85 46.9%	.412
<i>Grand Mean Score for 2a</i>							1.49 37.7%	
2b	13	I lead curricular development committees at school	98 48.5%	47 23.3%	33 16.3%	24 11.8%	1.91 47.9%	.312
	14	I monitor curricular development at school in reference to student results	77 38.1%	51 25.2%	47 23.3%	27 13.3%	2.11 52.9%	.112
	15	I monitor curricular development at school in reference to school goals	96 47.5%	36 17.8%	51 25.2%	19 9.4%	1.96 49.9%	.011
	16	I play a leading role in curricular enrichment at school	167 82.6%	29 14.3%	1 .49%	5 2.4%	1.22 30.9%	.214
	<i>Grand Mean Score for 2b</i>							1.8 45.5%
2c	17	I meet with teachers on individual basis at least once per year	167 82.6%	29 14.3%	1 .49%	5 2.4%	1.22 30.9%	.001
	18	I analyze student results with individual teachers or teacher groups	183 90.5%	16 7.9%	3 1.4%	0 0%	1.10 27.9%	.222
	19	I play a leading role in supporting teachers in developing student assessment material	183 90.5%	19 9.4%	0 0%	0 0%	1.09 27.9%	.412
	20	I communicate school academic progress to teachers on yearly basis	96 47.5%	36 17.8%	51 25.2%	19 9.4%	1.96 49.9%	.011
	21	I communicate school academic progress to students on yearly basis	167 82.6%	29 14.3%	5 2.4%	1 .49%	1.22 30.9%	167 82.6%
	22	I communicate school academic progress to parents on yearly basis	183 90.5%	16 7.9%	3 1.4%	0 0%	1.10 27.9%	.202
	<i>Grand Mean Score for 2c</i>							1.09 27.9%
<i>Grand Mean Score for Domain 2</i>							1.46 36.6%	

participants in the study. The majority of the sample was comprised of females (58.2%). Almost half (49.6%) of the school principals' ages ranged between 26-35 and novice principals were null in the sample. The majority of school principals had an experience that exceeded 20 years. 57.3% of principals possessed non-education major bachelors degree, 25.2% possessed education-major degrees, 20.4% held master's degrees and only 3.1% hold PhDs. The demographic characteristics of participants are presented in table 2.

### Research Question 1: What instructional leadership roles and responsibilities are performed by private school principals in Beirut?

Part II of ILBSP collected information about the instructional leadership practices of school principals

through their own lens. Statistical Package Software for Social Sciences (SPSS 18.0) was employed to compute frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations of principals' responses. Tables 3a, 3b and 3c presents such data.

Table 3a shows a grand mean score of 2.21 for the first domain of Hallinger's (1983; 2008) instructional leadership domains. This entails that 55.2% of the sample were stratifying the role of an instructional leader in defining school's mission. The grand mean scores for each of the subdomains 1a (framing school goals) and 1b (communicating school goals) were more than 50%. Their grand mean scores were respectively 2.4 (60.2%) and 2.21 (55.2%).

71.5% of school principals considered themselves to be actively developing school wide goals (M= 2.86, SD= 0.011). However only 49.6% assured that they did so in collaboration with teachers (M= 1.98, SD= 0.014). 62% of

**Table 3c** Instructional Leadership Practices of School Principals (Domain 3)

D	Instructional Leadership Practices		Never Do	Sometimes Do	Frequently Do	Always Do	M	SD	
3a	23	I avoid class interruptions what so ever the reason was	3	89	43	67	2.86	.011	
			1.4%	44.0%	21.2%	33.1%	71.9%		
	24	I inhibit students' time-out of the classrooms what so ever the reason was	28	31	42	101	3.06	.014	
			13.8%	15.3%	20.7%	5.0%	76.9%		
	25	I have very strict policies to deal with late students at schools	36	63	73	30	2.48	.021	
		17.8%	31.1%	36.1%	14.8%	62.9%			
	26	I have very strict policies to deal with tardiness of students at schools	53	67	43	39	2.33	.421	
			26.2%	33.1%	21.2%	19.3%	58.4%		
	27	I have very strict policies against teachers who manipulate class time for unplanned non-curricular activities (even extra-curricular activities; end-of-year show)	109	43	21	29	1.85	.225	
			53.9%	21.2%	10.3%	14.3%	46.2%		
	<i>Grand Mean Score for 3a</i>						2.5		
							62.9%		
3b	28	I make sure to attend morning assemblies at school	177	21	2	2	1.15	.221	
			87.6%	10.3%	0.9%	0.9%	28.8%		
	29	I make sure to wander among students during recess time frequently	115	43	41	3	1.66	.311	
			56.9%	21.2%	20.2%	1.4%	41.5%		
	30	I make sure to show up in teachers' lounges frequently	167	29	1	5	1.22	.001	
			82.6%	14.3%	.49%	2.4%	30.5%		
	31	I attend after school extra-curricular activities frequently	177	21	2	2	1.15	.321	
			87.6%	10.3%	0.9%	0.9%	28.8%		
	32	I attend activities lead by students in school	167	29	1	5	1.22	.214	
			82.6%	14.3%	.49%	2.4%	30.5%		
	<i>Grand Mean Score for 3b</i>						1.28		
							32.0%		
3c	33	I reward teacher performance with material incentives	188	5	6	3	1.12	.312	
			93.0%	2.4%	2.9%	1.4%	28.0%		
	34	I reward teacher performance with moral incentives	77	51	47	27	2.11	.112	
			38.1%	25.2%	23.3%	13.3%	52.9%		
	35	Professional growth opportunities are included on the list of teacher reinforcement	116	47	20	19	1.71	.011	
			57.4%	23.2%	9.9%	9.4%	42.8%		
	<i>Grand Mean Score for 3c</i>						1.64		
							41.1%		
3d	36	I play a leading role in planning for teacher professional growth activities	1	5	29	167	3.79	.112	
			.49%	2.4%	14.3%	82.6%	94.8%		
	37	I revise teacher professional development opportunities to ensure that they are aligned with school goals	77	51	47	27	2.11	.152	
				38.1%	25.2%	23.3%	13.3%	52.9%	
	38	I plan for enrollment of all teachers in professional development activities	96	36	51	19	1.96	.411	
			47.5%	17.8%	25.2%	9.4%	49.1%		
	39	I invite teachers to suggest topics for professional development activities	116	47	20	19	1.71	.011	
			57.4%	23.2%	9.9%	9.4%	42.8%		
	40	I make use of student results in planning for teacher professional development	167	29	1	5	1.22	.214	
			82.6%	14.3%	.49%	2.4%	30.5%		
	<i>Grand Mean Score for 3d</i>						2.15		
							53.9%		
3e	41	I reward student performance with material incentives	167	29	1	5	1.22	.501	
				82.6%	14.3%	.49%	2.4%	30.5%	
	42	I reward student performance with moral incentives	167	29	1	5	1.22	.061	
				82.6%	14.3%	.49%	2.4%	30.5%	
	43	I have set policies to make sure that teachers reinforce student performance	3	89	43	67	2.86	.091	
			1.4%	44.0%	21.2%	33.1%	71.5%		
	44	I provide moral incentives for parents of students with improved performance	96	36	51	19	1.96	.211	
			47.5%	17.8%	25.2%	9.4%	49.1%		
	<i>Grand Mean Score for 3e</i>						1.81		
							45.3%		
	<i>Grand Men Score for Domain 3</i>						1.8		
							46.9%		

those principals claimed that they used student results to develop those goals ( $M= 2.48, SD= 0.0211$ ).

Though 71.5% of school principals confirmed they developed school wide goals, only 58.4% considered themselves to be making such goals visible to the school community ( $M= 2.33, SD= 0.111$ ) and 41.5 % of them to be discussing those goals with teachers ( $M= 1.66, SD= 0.213$ ).

When curricula are being revised, 61.1% of school principals suggest that they referred to school goals ( $M= 2.44, SD= 0.123$ ). Finally, only 49.1% of the sample designed extracurricular activities in accordance with school goals ( $M= 1.96, SD= 0.320$ ).

This is as far as domain 1 of Hallinger (1983; 2008) is concerned. Table 3b represents the results obtained for the second domain.

The second domain of Hallinger (1983; 2008) was weaker than the first as table 3b shows. The grand mean score for the whole domain was 1.46, which means that only 36.5% of principals considered themselves to be managing their instructional programs effectively in their schools. The sub-domain that obtained the highest mean score was 'coordination and curriculum' (45%) followed by 'supervising and evaluating instruction' (37.4%) and last by 'monitoring student progress' (27.4%). No single items of any of the sub-domains received an average mean score. All were less than 50%.

Attendance in classes and ensuring that teaching was aligned with school goals was limited to 41.5% of school principals ( $M= 1.66, SD= 0.311$ ). 40.2% of principals attended classes to ensure that their students were acquiring basic skills ( $M=1.60, SD= 0.214$ ) and only 30.2% of principals chatted with students about their learning ( $M=1.22, SD=0.001$ ). When principals attend classes, only 28.8% conduct pre-observation conferences with teachers ( $M= 1.15, SD= .221$ ) and 46.2 % often hold post-observation conferences with them to discuss their observation and means for teacher improvement ( $M=1.85, SD=0.412$ ).

On a brighter side, 47.8% of school principals manifested that they led curricular development in schools ( $M= 1.91, SD= 0.312$ ). 52.9% of them did that in reference to student results ( $M= 2.11, SD= 0.112$ ) and 49.1% did it in reference to school goals ( $M= 1.96, SD= 0.011$ ). However, only 30.5% of them considered themselves to be playing an active role in curricular development ( $M= 1.22, SD= 0.214$ ).

This brightness, however, does not include meeting teachers on individual basis to discuss any issue (30.5%,  $M= 1.22, SD= 0.001$ ); nor it comprises meeting them to discuss student results (27.7%,  $M= 1.10, SD= 0.222$ ). Equally, only 27.3 % of school principals admitted that they played a role in enriching curricula ( $M= 1.09, SD= 0.412$ ).

Finally, 49.1% of school principals claimed that they communicated school progress to teachers ( $M=1.96, SD=0.011$ ), while such communication decreased to

30.5% ( $M=1.22, SD= 0.167$ ) in the case of students and 27.7% ( $M= 1.10, SD= 0.202$ ) in the case of parents.

The third domain of Hallinger (1983; 2008) is represented in table 3b.

The third domain of Hallinger (1983; 2008) showed highest scores within the study as well as some comparable low scores. This is reflected in table 3c. The overall grand mean score for the whole domain was 1.8 which means that 46.9% of school principals considered themselves to be promoting a positive school culture that is conducive to student learning. Sub-domains received the following scores: 'protecting instructional time' (62.9%); 'maintaining high visibility' (32.0%); 'providing incentives for teachers' (41.1%); 'promoting professional development' (53.9%); and 'providing incentives for learning' (45.3%).

It seems that a good percentage of participant principals valued instructional time and for this reason 71.5% ( $M= 2.86, SD= 0.011$ ) claimed that they inhibited classroom interruptions, 76.7% ( $M= 3.06, SD= 0.014$ ) assured that they did not allow time-out for students, 62.0% ( $M=2.48, SD=0.021$ ) explained that they did set strict policies against students who came late to school or who made early departures ( $M=2.33, SD=0.421$ ). Yet, it seems that some principals were ok with teachers using instructional time for activities such as extracurricular activities and end-of-year show and similar activities, as 46.2% ( $M= 1.85, SD= 0.0225$ ) explained that they did allow for such things to happen.

The mingling of school principals with teachers and students in schools seemed to be relatively weak as only 28.8% ( $M= 1.15, SD= 0.221$ ) said that they attended morning assemblies and 41.5% ( $M= 1.66, SD= 0.311$ ) showed up during recess time. 30.5% ( $M=1.21, SD=0.001$ ) of school principals informed the study that they showed up in teachers' lounges, 28.8% ( $M=1.15, SD=0.321$ ) said they attended extra-curricular activities held after school and 30.5% ( $M=1.22, SD= 0.214$ ) claimed that they attended student-led activities in schools.

A better result (41.1%), yet also below 50%, is principals' handling of teachers' incentives. 28.2% ( $M= 1.12, SD= 0.312$ ) of school principals provided teachers with material incentives, 52.9% ( $M= 2.11, SD= 0.112$ ) provided teachers with moral incentives, and 42.8% ( $M=1.71, SD= 0.011$ ) motivated teachers through providing them with professional growth opportunities.

As stated earlier, 53.9 % of school principals believed they played a critical role in planning for teacher professional development. 94.8% ( $M=3.79, SD= 0.112$ ) of school principals claimed they played the major role in planning for teachers' professional growth and 52.9% ( $M=2.11, SD= 0.152$ ) assured that they did that in alignment with school goals. 49.1% ( $M= 1.96, SD= 0.411$ ) said they ensured enrolment of all teachers in professional development activities, 42.8% ( $M= 1.71, SD= 0.011$ ) explained that they involved teachers in

planning for teacher professional development and only 30.5% (M= 1.22, SD= 0.214) claimed that they took into consideration student results whilst planning for those professional activities.

Finally 46.9% of school principals believed that they were playing a role in rewarding student performance. 30.5% (M= 1.22, SD= 0.501) did that through providing material incentives, while 30.5% (M=1.22, SD= 0.061) did it through moral incentives. 71.5% (M=2.86, SD= 0.091) explained that they had policies in place to safeguard reinforcement of student performance by teachers, while 49.1% (M=1.96, SD= 0.2111) of school principals claimed that they provided moral incentives for parents of students who showed improved performance.

As results indicate the instructional leadership behavior of school principals is weak across all domains and sub-domains. Within this line, and through their own lens, principals seemed to be doing the best with setting school goals. However, communicating these goals and making use of them in planning for other activities at school does not seem to be in place. Principals are quite far from classrooms and hence are missing important elements that make up the profile of an effective instructional leader such as the supervision and evaluation of instruction, coordinating school the review, development and enrichment of curricula and monitoring student progress. Finally school principals do not seem to be actively working to secure a positive school climate conducive for the promotion of their schools into professional learning communities in which student learning is the focus. They seem to be appreciating the importance of instructional time, yet they do not seem to succeed in creating the policies that safeguard that precious time. In the same vein, principals do not seem to be crafting an incentive system for encouraging student performance.

## CONCLUSION

Consistent with the literature, this study confirms that the relationships of principal leadership with instruction and learning are indirect and small. Data clearly indicated that the majority of individual instructional leadership behaviors and overall leadership functions measured by the ILBSP were not being demonstrated by private school principals within the surveyed population.

Research and practice indicates that instructional leadership focused on student learning outcomes results in student success (Crum and Sherman, 2008; Dinham, 2005; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2008; Southworth, 2009). It can be argued that the different responses from principals in this study revealed that they lacked this knowledge; otherwise they would have paid special attention to fulfilling those tasks.

The principal's primary responsibility is to promote the learning and success of all students. They need to know

that playing an active role in the school that impacts learning whether directly or indirectly should be on the top of their priorities list.

If the nature and expectations of school principalship are indeed changing and growing more complex, there is a necessity to identify and prioritize leadership characteristics that can be associated with effective schools. By doing so, present and future administrators can target their efforts on aspects of the job that will be most effective and efficient in improving and sustaining these schools. They can focus on "doing the right work" as Marzano, Walters, and McNulty (2005, p. 76) suggest.

## Recommendations for Research and Practice

Principals' preparation, capacity building and in-service training should be built in a way that would help them focus on impacting instruction by focusing on learning; encouraging collaboration; analyzing results; providing support; and aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Future research should address the following:

1. Although this study demonstrated principals' perceptions of their own roles as instructional leaders, it did not allow for participants to explain or elaborate their answers. Future research could combine both quantitative and qualitative procedures in a mixed-method study.

2. It is recommended that future research utilizes the same survey instrument (ILBSP) with teachers so as to examine instructional leadership behaviors of school principals through their own lens.

3. Future research should attempt to survey a larger sample than the one involved in this study. It would be interesting to examine instructional leadership of school principals from rural areas and governorates other than the capital Beirut.

4. It would be useful to conduct correlational studies between instructional leadership behaviors and factors that contribute to school improvement such as organizational trust.

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