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# A Call to Strengthen Instructional Leadership to Support Learner Achievement During and Post COVID-19: A Systematic Literature Review Approach

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**Abstract.** The coronavirus disease 19 has dismantled the traditional approaches to school management of education, prompting an urgent need to maintain teaching and learning during and post the pandemic. This study thus calls for strengthening instructional leadership to improve learner performance during and post the pandemic. Instructional leadership is an emerging concept from education leadership; however, the literature on educational leadership functions is still in its infancy. Subsequently, there is a lack of a complete understanding of the role of the School Management Team and educators' instructional practices in managing teaching and learning in education literature. Although the School Management Team should identify and improve instructional practices to help learners attain learning outcomes, this goal is hindered by a lack of compressive insight into the relationship between instructional leadership and learner achievement. The purpose of this Systematic Literature Review is to examine the instructional leadership roles of SMTs and educators as identified by academics and practitioners. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis reporting guidelines were adopted in the study. An electronic search identified 127 publications. After duplication, titles and abstracts were screened, and inclusion and exclusion criteria were considered; 27 full-text version publications were assessed. Findings revealed a comprehensive conceptual relationship between instructional leadership roles at different hierarchical levels and

their influence on learner performance. This study contributes a synthesised literature review on strengthening instructional leadership to promote learner attainment. These findings have implications for policymakers interested in promoting learner performance through strengthened instructional leadership during and post the coronavirus.

**Keywords:** School Management Teams, school leadership, principal leadership, educators, educator leadership, learner achievements, COVID-19

## 1. Introduction

The disruption of teaching and learning during the Coronavirus Diseases 19 (COVID-19) has given rise to several challenges in education that prompt the call for strengthening the management of education systems within the schools (Jandrić et al., 2020). According to the World Bank (2020), teaching and learning in schools have been adversely affected by COVID-19. Instructional leadership is a key function of school management which influences learner performance. According to research, the instructional leadership quality of school administrators, such as School Management Teams (SMTs), can influence learners' academic performance (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Veletić & Olsen, 2021). Studies on instructional leadership have provided compelling evidence that the way instructions of teaching and learning are conducted in the school affects learner learning outcomes (Bellibas et al., 2016; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). For SMTs and educators who want positive changes in their schools, instructional leadership is essential (Bellibas et al., 2016). As provided by the SMTs, instructional leadership is viewed as a key factor in education reform (Veletić & Olsen, 2021). Given the critical responsibilities for schools to continue with effective teaching and learning during and post the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative for schools to consider improving learner performance through strengthened instructional leadership. This is because the duration of COVID-19 is unknown; despite this uncertainty, it is also essential to enhance instructional leader practices beyond the pandemic era.

Instructional leadership is one of the key roles of SMTs since it is connected to students, teachers, instruction and learning methods (Shava et al., 2021). Presumably, insight into the other roles of instructional leadership is necessary in order to improve learner performance in schools during and post COVID-19. In advocacy for promoting instructional leadership in school, Vanblaere and Devos (2016) propose that to stimulate professional learning communities in high schools, school leaders' roles must shift from that of a business manager to that of an instructional leader. There is growing evidence that effective instructional leadership improves learner attainment in schools. Against this backdrop, it is important to conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) into the relationship between instructional leadership and learner performance in school. Such a study may provide insights that may assist in strengthening school management systems during and post the pandemic.

Instructional leadership impacts educators' teaching methods, which is directly tied to learners learning results and raises learners' potential. As a result, instructional leaders must be aware of the issues that educators and learners encounter. Hallinger and Murphy (1985), mention that sound instructional leadership can be obtained from SMTs. Conceding the views of Hallinger and Murphy (1985), this study extended the argument that SMTs are not the only role players in instructional leadership; it is also the duty of educators. Carpenter (2015) asserts that the adaption of distributed leadership by SMTs promotes active educators' collaboration towards improved teaching and learning. Principal leadership significantly impacts academic performance, although it is often felt indirectly through classroom educators, school processes, and the teaching climate (Liu & Werblow, 2019). This effect is especially powerful when school administrators foster employee trust and co-operation (Bryk et al., 2010; Heck & Hallinger, 2009). For these reasons, educators and other stakeholders must be involved in class leadership and management, as their participation in decision-making is positively associated with staff satisfaction and commitment (Liu & Werblow, 2013; Liu & Werblow, 2019; Spillane & Healey, 2010).

Studies on school leadership have provided policymakers with more compelling evidence about the scope of instructional leadership and the means by which leadership affects learner learning outcomes (Bellibas et al., 2016; Shava et al., 2021; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). Bellibas et al., (2016) suggest that instructional leadership is essential for SMTs and educators who want to see positive changes. The notion of instructional leadership must be understood and applied by educational leaders in carrying out their tasks and obligations in schools (Ail et al., 2015; Kemethofer et al., 2022). When educator instructional leaders teach full-time and perform formal roles in a school's hierarchy (e.g., coach, specialist, mentor), adequate time is devoted to the two positions. However, informal educator leaders may not have separate time dedicated to instructional leadership roles (Smith et al., 2017). According to Smith et al. (2017), the educator's instructional leadership position must be balanced with other management tasks. Some instructional leaders perform several tasks; thus, it is possible that they cannot tell the difference between the instructional leadership task and their management responsibilities. The inability to recognise instructional leadership as a unique task may limit the chances of discovering loopholes associated with exercising this function. It is likely that this role will not be strengthened at both the SMT and educator levels. Increased school autonomy and a greater focus on learner achievement have necessitated a rethinking of the instructional leadership role of SMTs and educators.

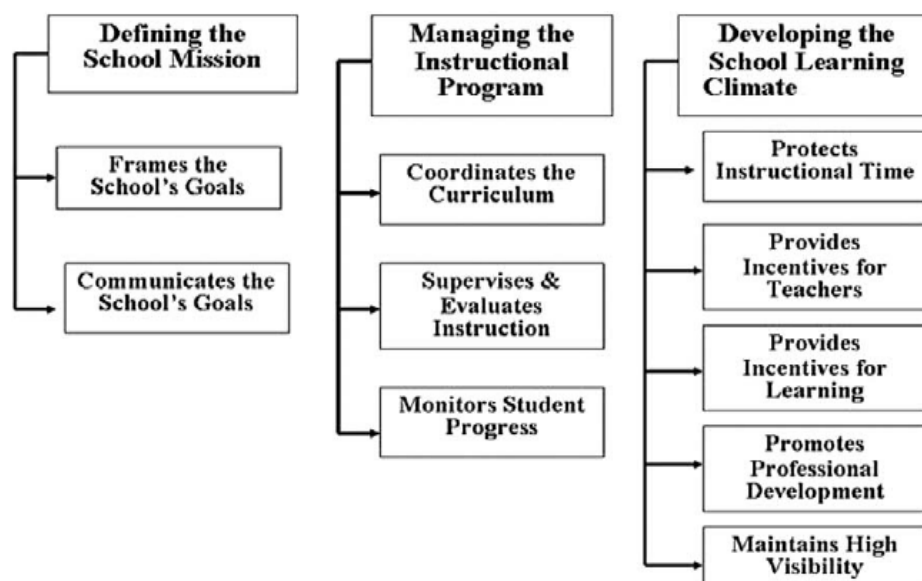
van der Merwe and Schenck (2016) pointed out a misunderstanding of the SMTs' instructional practices in managing teaching and learning. Mestry (2019) posited that some of the SMTs' instructional practices can be found in their general SMTs roles. These findings are a reflection of the absence of role clarity and distinction of instructional leadership in the function of school management. Scholars have indicated the critical need to outline, distribute and implement SMTs instructional practices among different hierarchies of school management systems as necessary for improved learner performance (Hallinger, 2011; Manaseh, 2016).

Although several studies (e.g., Bellibas et al., 2016; Shava et al., 2021; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016) have been conducted on instructional leadership, fewer studies have focused on providing a comprehensive SLR of the relationship between instructional leadership and learner performance. Furthermore, to the researcher's knowledge, no study has focused on the COVID-19 era. To address the gap in the literature on the influence of instructional leadership in supporting learner achievement during and post COVID-19; thus, adopting the SLR approach to examine the instructional leadership practices of SMTs and educators. The following research objectives guided this investigation: Firstly, to systematically review the roles of SMTs as instructional leaders. Secondly, to systematically review the roles of educators as instructional leaders.

The rest of this article is structured as follows. Firstly, the theoretical framework expands the understanding of the roles of SMTs as instructional leaders. We then provided a brief outline of the research methodology adopted for this study. This was followed by a discussion of findings on the salient issues of institutional leadership in the literature. Finally, the article concluded by providing conclusions derived from the findings of the study.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

Principles of instructional leadership theory provide the theoretical framework for fostering learner learning outcomes and; therefore, the quality of teaching and learning (Day et al., 2016; Hallinger, 2019; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Robinson et al., 2008; Zhu et al., 2020). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) and Veletić and Olsen (2021) enhanced the appliance of instructional leadership theory into practise by developing the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) as a conceptual framework and a scale for measuring instructional leadership. This framework identifies ten functions that correspond to three dimensions of instructional leadership. The primary dimension, defining the school's mission, entails two tasks: framing and communicating the school's objectives. The second dimension, managing the instructional programme, entails three functions: curriculum co-ordination, instruction evaluation and supervision, and learner progress monitoring. Lastly, developing the school learning climate entails protecting instructional time, providing incentives for educators, providing incentives for learning, promoting professional development, and maintaining high principal visibility within the school are the five functions of the dimension, developing the school's learning climate. The three functions provided in Hallinger and Murphy (1985) may provide a sound instructional leadership framework whose guidelines may help SMT's to work toward a common goal (Veletić & Olsen, 2021). A visual presentation of the PIMRS theoretical framework is depicted in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: PIMRS theoretical framework**

Source: Hallinger and Murphy (1985)

### 3. Materials and methods

This section discussed the material and research methods employed in this study which include SLR, search process, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and quality evaluation.

#### *Systematic Literature Review (SLR)*

The SLR was performed to examine the instructional leadership roles of SMTs and educators as identified by academics and practitioners. According to Shahrol et al. (2020), SLR identifies, evaluates, analyses, and interprets the research results and findings relevant to the research problem. The SLR's primary goals are to present a broad-spectrum image, collate evidence for specific questions, and summarise the existing literature on a problem. The SLR was used to identify, evaluate, interpret, and analyse available studies to address specific research questions on the roles of SMTs and educators as instructional leaders, following the guidelines set out by Kitchenham and Charters (2007). As such, an interpretive research paradigm helps to achieve the goal of the SLR approach in a study.

A comprehensive search of primary studies, the identification of inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the assessment of the quality of included studies are the three steps of the SLR approach adopted for this study. The explanations for each step are listed below. To assess the quality and applicability of current literature, the researchers employed systematic ordering and description of the findings to arrange them into related conceptual groupings (Motyka, 2018).

#### *Search process*

PRISMA reporting guidelines were followed throughout this study (Hutton et al., 2015). Online indexing database libraries, such as ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Xplore Digital Library, were used to search for articles published in English. Keywords like "instructional leadership," "educator leader," and "School Management Team" were also used on the Mendeley desktop. The results of the

search were recorded by categorising and listing the existing academic papers in journals, conferences, book chapters, theses, and websites (Table 1).

**Table 1. Search process**

Material search	Publications	Inclusion to the current study	Exclusion to the current study
Journals	108	24	84
Conference	10	0	10
Books chapters	5	2	3
Theses	4	1	3
Websites	0	0	0
Total	127	27	100

#### *Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

When conducting the SLR, some inclusion criteria are taken into account. A collection of papers from the source library were reviewed and sorted, with published papers from journals and conferences receiving priority. Another requirement for inclusion was that all studies be written in English. As a result, the papers should at the very least include the roles of instructional leaders played by either educators or SMTs across the globe and the study population must be from a primary or secondary school. In addition, the SLR has its own set of exclusion criteria. This SLR automatically excludes papers that are not written in English. Finally, papers that met the criteria for inclusion and exclusion were short-listed and reviewed for final selection (quality evaluation). A total of 227 studies reporting outcomes at 34 weeks were identified, but heterogeneity in study design allowed the synthesis of only 27.

#### *Quality evaluation*

The researchers developed a few guidelines to select relevant papers for the current study to validate the quality of the selected papers. To comply with the quality assessment, this step of the SLR process was necessary to ensure that only relevant, valid, reliable, and related articles to the current study were selected and applied. This was done using search strings whereby only studies containing the keywords "School Management Teams, " "school leadership, " "principal leadership, " "educators, " "educator leadership, " "learner achievements, " and "COVID-19" were included. To be fully evaluated, an article must include a discussion of at least one role of SMTs or the educator as an instructional leader, as well as a discussion of the role's strengths and weaknesses in terms of learner achievement (see Table 3).

## 4. Results

This section presents the literature search results and categorisation of reviewed studies.

### *Literature search result*

An electronic search identified 127 publications. After duplication, titles and abstracts were screened, and inclusion and exclusion criteria were considered; thus, 27 full-text version publications were assessed. The reviewed studies were conducted in 13 countries, across six continents, as shown in Table 2. The findings indicate that South Africa has limited studies focusing on combined SMTs and educator's instructional leadership. It is believed that this study would help to identify the instructional leadership roles of SMTs and educators in attaining learners' performance.

**Table 2: Distribution of reviewed studies by country**

Number	Country where the study was conducted	Number of research reports
1	Australia	One
2	Belgium	One
3	China	Two
4	Hong Kong	Two
5	Lebanon	One
6	Malaysia	One
7	Netherlands	One
8	Norway	One
9	Oman	One
10	Pakistan	One
11	South Africa	One
12	Swaziland	One
13	USA	Ten
14	Multinational	Three

### *Categorisation of reviewed studies*

The SLR of existing studies is based on a systematic ordering and description of the findings of the studies that have been reviewed. Tables 3 and 4 divided the studies into categories based on the SMTs' and educators' roles as instructional leaders.

**Table 3: SMTs roles as instructional leaders in strengthening learner achievement**

Function	School	Authors	Title
Framing school goals		Hallinger (2011); Harris, Jones, Cheah, Devadason and Adams (2017)	Lessons learned from 40 years of empirical research on learning leadership Exploring principals' instructional leadership practices in Malaysia: Insights and implications.
	Secondary	Carpenter (2015)	Professional learning communities' culture and leadership
	Primary	Leithwood et al., (2020)	A test of "The Four Paths Model" to see how school leadership influences learner learning
		Veletić and Olsen (2021)	TALIS is working on creating a standardized cluster model for instructional leadership
		Al-Mahdy et al., (2018)	Oman is evaluating the impact of principle instructional leadership and collective educator efficacy on educator commitment
Communicating school goals	Primary	van der Merwe and Schenck (2016)	Instructional leadership in Swaziland primary schools: The basics
		Hallinger (2011); Harris, Jones, Cheah, Devadason and Adams (2017)	Lessons learned from 40 years of empirical research on learning leadership Exploring principals' instructional leadership practices in Malaysia: Insights and implications.
		Al-Mahdy et al., (2018)	Oman is working on evaluating the impact of principle instructional leadership and collective educator efficacy on educator commitment
		Vanblaere and Devos (2016)	A multilevel investigation of the relationship between school leadership and perceived professional learning community features
	Secondary	Carpenter (2015)	Professional learning communities' culture and leadership
Curriculum co-ordination	Primary	van der Merwe and Schenck (2016)	Instructional leadership in Swaziland primary schools: The basics
	Secondary	Mestry (2019)	The instructional leadership role of School Management Teams in closing the achievement gap in low-income schools
		Al-Mahdy et al., (2018)	Oman is evaluating the impact of principal instructional leadership and collective educator efficacy on educator commitment



Evaluation and supervision of instruction	Primary and secondary	Liebowitz and Porter (2019)	The empirical literature: A systematic review and meta-analysis on the effect of principal behaviors on learner, educator, and school outcomes
	Secondary	Ail et al., (2015)	Three Mara Junior Science Colleges (Mjsc) in Pahang, Malaysia: Principals' instructional leadership and educators' commitment
	Primary	Leithwood et al., (2020)	A test of "The Four Paths Model" to see how school leadership influences learner learning
	Secondary	Mestry (2019)	The instructional leadership role of School Management Teams in closing the achievement gap in low-income schools
		Smith et al., (2017)	The environment in which instructional educators lead
	.	Veletić and Olsen (2021)	TALIS is working on creating a standardized cluster model for instructional leadership
Monitoring of learner progress	Secondary	Mestry (2019)	The instructional leadership role of School Management Teams in closing the achievement gap in low-income schools
	.	Veletić and Olsen (2021)	TALIS is working on creating a standardized cluster model for instructional leadership
Protection of instruction time	Primary	van der Merwe and Schenck (2016)	Instructional leadership in Swaziland primary schools: The basics
	Primary and secondary	Liebowitz and Porter (2019)	The empirical literature: A systematic review and meta-analysis on the effect of principal behaviors on learner, educator, and school outcomes
	Primary	Leithwood et al., (2020)	A test of "The Four Paths Model" to see how school leadership influences learner learning
	Secondary	Mestry (2019)	The instructional leadership role of School Management Teams in closing the achievement gap in low-income schools
Provision of incentives for educators	.	Fryer (2013)	Evidence from New York City public schools on educator incentives and learner achievement
	Primary and secondary	Liebowitz and Porter (2019)	The empirical literature: A systematic review and meta-analysis on the effect of principal behaviors on learner, educator, and school outcomes
		Al-Mahdy et al., (2018)	Oman is evaluating the impact of principle instructional leadership

			and collective educator efficacy on educator commitment
	Primary	Leithwood et al., (2020)	How school leadership influences learner learning: A test of "The Four Paths Model"
	Primary	Heck and Hallinger (2009)	Assessing distributed leadership's contribution to school improvement and math achievement growth
	.	Hilton et al., (2015)	The impact of educators' and school leaders' professional growth as participants in educators' professional development
Provision of incentives for learning	.	Fryer (2013)	Evidence from New York City public schools on educator incentives and learner achievement
	Primary and secondary	Liebowitz and Porter (2019)	The empirical literature: A systematic review and meta-analysis on the effect of principal behaviors on learner, educator, and school outcomes
		Zhu et al., (2020)	A test of "The Four Paths Model" to see how school leadership influences learner learning
	Primary	Leithwood et al., (2020)	How school leadership influences learner learning
	Primary	Heck and Hallinger (2009)	Assessing distributed leadership's contribution to school improvement and math achievement growth
Promotion of professional development	Primary and secondary	Liebowitz and Porter (2019); Veletić and Olsen (2021)	The empirical literature: A systematic review on the effect of principal behaviors on learner, educator, and school outcomes TALIS is working on creating a standardized cluster model for instructional leadership
	Secondary	Ail et al., (2015); Veletić and Olsen (2021)	The empirical literature: A systematic review on learner, educator, and school outcomes TALIS is working on creating a standardized cluster model for instructional leadership
	Secondary	Carpenter (2015)	Professional learning communities' culture and leadership
	Primary	Leithwood et al., (2020)	A test of "The Four Paths Model" to see how school leadership influences learner learning
		Hilton et al., (2015)	The impact of educators' and school leaders' professional growth as participants in educators' professional development

	Secondary	Mestry (2019)	The instructional leadership role of School Management Teams in closing the achievement gap in low-income schools
		Liu et al., (2021)	In China, the impact of distributed leadership on educator job satisfaction: Educator autonomy and collaboration have a mediating role
	High school	McLaughlin and Talbert (2007)	Challenges and potential strategies in forming professional learning communities in high schools
		Vanblaere and Devos (2016)	A multilevel examination into the relationship between school leadership and perceived aspects of the professional learning community
Continuity of high principal visibility of the school	Primary	van der Merwe and Schenck (2016)	Instructional leadership in Swaziland primary schools: The basics
	Primary	Heck and Hallinger (2009)	Assessing distributed leadership's contribution to school improvement and math achievement growth
		Hilton et al., (2015)	The impact of educators' and school leaders' professional growth as participants in educators' professional development
		Vanblaere and Devos (2016)	A multilevel analysis showing the relationship between school leadership and the characteristics of the professional learning community
	Secondary	Mestry (2019)	The instructional leadership role of School Management Teams in closing the achievement gap in low-income schools
		Veletić and Olsen (2021)	TALIS is working on creating a standardized cluster model for instructional leadership

**Table 4: Educators' roles as instructional leaders in strengthening learner achievement**

Function	School	Authors	Title
Communicating school goals		Harrison and Killion (2007)	Educators have ten roles to play.
		Vanblaere and Devos (2016)	A multilevel investigation of the relationship between school leadership and perceived professional learning community features
		Al-Mahdy et al., (2018)	Oman is evaluating the impact of principle instructional leadership and collective educator efficacy on educator commitment
	High-need schools	Berry et al., (2010)	Leadership in education: Paving the way for effective teaching and learning
Evaluation and supervision of instruction		Harrison and Killion (2007)	Educators have ten roles to play
		Smith et al., (2017)	The environment in which instructional educators lead
	Secondary	Sharar and Nawab (2020)	Educator leadership techniques as seen by educators: A case study of private secondary schools in Lahore, Pakistan
		Liu and Werblow (2019)	The operation of distributed leadership, organizational commitment and principal and educator job satisfaction
		Ware and Kitsantas (2007)	Professional commitment is predicted by educator and collective efficacy views
	High school	Ghamrawi (2013)	Educators assisting educators: A model of professional development that encourages educator leadership
Monitoring of learner progress		Harrison and Killion (2007)	Educators have ten different instructional roles to play in the classroom.
		Smith et al., (2017)	The environment in which instructional educators lead
		Vanblaere and Devos (2016)	School leadership and professional learning perceptions. A multilayer examination of community characteristics
	Secondary	Zwart et al., (2009)	What factors influence educator learning as seen by educators and their students in a reciprocal peer coaching context?
		Ingersoll et al., (2018)	Educators' responsibilities in decision-making and learner performance
Protection of instruction time		Harrison and Killion (2007)	Educators have ten roles to play
	Secondary	Sharar and Nawab (2020)	Educator leadership practices as regarded by educators: In Lahore, Pakistan, an instance of private secondary schools
		Spillane and Healey (2010)	An exploration of some study operations and measures in conceptualizing school leadership and management from a distributed perspective

		Liu (2021)	Contextual influences on educator leadership, both formal and informal
Provision of incentives for educators		Hilton et al., (2015)	The impact of educators' and school leaders' professional growth as participants in educators' professional development.
		Leithwood et al., (2020)	A test of "The Four Paths Model" to see how school leadership influences learner learning
Provision of incentives for learning		Harrison and Killion (2007)	Ten roles for educators helping educators
	High school	Ghamrawi (2013)	A professional development model that promotes educator leadership
		Fryer (2013)	Evidence from New York City public schools on educator incentives and learner achievement
Promotion of professional development	High-need schools	Berry et al., (2010)	Leadership in education: Paving the way for effective teaching and learning
		Harrison and Killion (2007)	Ten roles for educators helping educators
	High school	Ghamrawi (2013)	A professional development model that promotes educator leadership
		Hilton et al., (2015)	The impact of educators' and school leaders' professional growth as participants in educators' professional development

## 5. Discussion of findings from the SLR approach

The discussion of findings is structured into instructional leaders' roles played by SMTs and educators in strengthening learner achievement.

### *School Management Teams*

The SMTs instructional leadership role in strengthening learner achievement is embedded in the principals and educators. A multilevel analysis of the relationship between school leadership and the characteristics of the professional learning community (Al-Mahdy, Emam & Hallinger, 2018). The principal's job in defining the mission includes framing school-wide goals (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). According to Al-Mahdy *et al.* (2018), the principal's role is to articulate and explain a vision for learning and build support for putting the vision into action in the school's existence. Effective schools have well-defined objectives that are centred on learners' success. In this post COVID-19, the focus should be on fewer goals that may be mobilised with the help of staff energy and other school resources. Many schools tend to benefit from a few unified objectives, each with a reasonable scope. The objectives should include information on previous and current learner performance, as well as staff roles and responsibilities for meeting the goals.

### *Communicating school goals*

During the pre and post COVID-19 era, it has always been the duty of the principals to oversee making instructional, curricular, and financial decisions. By discussing and reviewing them regularly, principals can ensure that staff understand the significance of school goals. The mission of the school can be communicated through both formal and informal interaction (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). While principals must take overall responsibility for instructional leadership, Al-Mahdy et al., (2018) pointed out that, in practice, they ought to collaborate with their middle-level leaders. It is then important to focus more the principal taking the lead in defining the school's vision and mission, and middle-level leaders should reinforce coaching and other professional development activities via contact with educators in this post COVID-19. The better educators valued their principal's transformational leadership, the more collective responsibility they perceived in their school (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016).

#### *Curriculum co-ordination*

Curriculum objectives and achievement tests are closely aligned in instructional effective schools. The curriculum looks to have a high degree of consistency across grade levels. Greater engagement among educators on instructional and curricular concerns generally supports this component of curricular co-ordination (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Deputy principals, department heads, and educators are usually delegated to perform curriculum co-ordination and instructional supervision (Al-Mahdy et al., 2018).

#### *Evaluation and supervision of instruction*

This study ascertained that in this post COVID-19, the principal's job is to ensure the school's goals are carried out in the classroom. This requires working with schools to co-ordinate instructors' teaching objectives and monitoring classroom instruction. For both supervisory and evaluation purposes, feedback to educators is concrete and tied to specific educational practices (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). According to Smith et al. (2017), administrators are often members of the educational leader's exosystem and can either provide or destroy leadership opportunities. This role can be argued to be connected to the traditional management roles of the SMTs. However, it is seen as part of an instructional leadership role as management ensures that the instructional leadership roles are continually monitored and supervised.

#### *Monitoring of learner progress*

Tests are used in the classroom to diagnose programmatic and student problems, as well as to assess the impact of modifications to the school's instructional programme. In various ways, principals play an important role in this area. Educators are given informative test findings, discuss test results with staff, and provide interpretative analyses that summarise the test data. Both standardised and criterion-referenced testing are emphasised in instructional effective schools. The results of these tests are used to set goals, assess the curriculum, evaluate instruction, and track progress toward school objectives.

#### *Protection of instruction time*

If announcements, tardy students, and office requests regularly interrupt lessons, instructors' classroom management and instructional skills will be underutilised.

The principal can exert control over this area by developing and implementing general school policies that minimise disruptions to classroom learning time (Al-Mahdy et al., 2018; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). School administrators who successfully implement these policies can potentially increase both allocated learning time and learner achievement (Al-Mahdy et al., 2018; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood et al., 2020).

*Provision of incentives for educators*

The principal can create a positive learning environment by implementing a work structure that recognises and rewards educators' achievements. Principals can also encourage instructors but are severely limited by the single remuneration schedule and tenure structure. However, research indicates that monetary incentives aren't the sole way to drive top performers. Principals can recognise educators in various ways, including private praise, public acknowledgement, and formal honours and awards (Al-Mahdy et al., 2018). According to Al-Mahdy et al. (2018), school principals who engage actively in instructional leadership can acquire higher commitment from their educators. This is a positive result and can be emphasised because educator commitment is a key factor in bringing about change and improvement in the classroom. While educator incentives have been shown to improve learner achievement in developing countries, Fryer (2013) suggests that they may have the opposite effect in the United States, particularly in larger schools.

*Provision of incentives for learning*

By constantly rewarding and recognising learners' academic progress and development, there is a need to build a school learning climate in which students respect academic performance (Zhu et al., 2020). The awards do not have to be excessive or costly; the most important component is recognition in front of educators and peers. Learners should be honoured in the classroom and in front of the entire school for their achievements. The principal is vital in connecting classrooms and reward systems and ensuring that they work in tandem. Learner achievement has been proven to be directly and indirectly influenced by school leadership (Zhu et al., 2020). Experiments using learner incentives suggest that programmes that directly incentivise educational production function inputs are more likely to succeed (Fryer, 2013).

*Promotion of professional development*

SMTs can help instructors enhance instruction in a variety of ways, including through professional development opportunities and in-service training. In addition, SMTs can ensure that staff programmes are strongly related to school goals and vision (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2007). Assisting educators with classroom implementation and integrating skills taught through staff development programmes are also part of this position. To achieve this goal, there is a global demand for schools to transform into professional learning communities, where educators accept responsibility for high-quality learner learning and are willing to learn from their peers through systematic collaboration. (Carpenter, 2015; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). According to Liu et al. (2021), distributed leadership indirectly impacts educator job satisfaction through professional collaboration. Hilton et al., (2015) confirm that school leaders'

participation in professional development programmes improves educators' ability to implement and reflect on new knowledge and practices (Sodiya & Hajiyeveva, 2022). They also revealed that they had a positive impact on the leaders' professional growth. (Hilton et al., 2015).

#### *Continuous principal visibility in the school*

Increased visibility in school and classrooms improves interactions between the principal and learners as well as between the principal and educators. This informal interaction provides the principal with additional information about the learners' and instructors' needs. It also allows the administration to express the school's priorities to SMT members. This can have a favourable impact on learners' and educators' attitudes and behaviours. For example, educators perceived higher instructional leadership from a school leader who was concerned about instructional concerns and frequently talked with staff members about these issues (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016).

#### *Educators' roles*

According to Liu (2021), educators can serve as formal or informal leaders. Informal educator leaders often decide on instructional materials and examine learner performance data, whereas formal educator leaders usually make decisions about assessment policy, educator evaluation, data analysis, and parental communication (Liu, 2021). According to Harrison and Killion (2007), formal educator leadership practices may include traditional leadership roles and responsibilities such as school co-ordinator, head educator, peer coach, and mentor. In contrast, informal educator leadership practices refer to roles and responsibilities that do not involve traditional leadership positions but have the potential to influence other educators. As a result, people who are led and those who lead may have differing perspectives on instructional leadership (Urick & Bowers, 2019; Veletić & Olsen, 2021). Educators' instructional leadership role in strengthening learner achievement include:

#### *Communicating school goals*

While the principal may take centre stage when it comes to articulating the school's vision and mission, middle-level leaders are critical in reinforcing these during interactions with educators (Al-Mahdy et al., 2018). Educators share this vision with one another and with their learners. As a result, educators share the responsibility of communicating the school's mission to learners. The better educators rank their principal's transformative leadership, the more collective responsibility they perceive in their school (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016).

#### *Curriculum co-ordination*

As more individuals realise that leadership is more than a job title, the concept of educator leadership is gaining traction among academics and practitioners (Sharar & Nawab, 2020). According to Sharar and Nawab (2020), educators should practice some leadership aspects, such as making instructional decisions, assisting new educators, organising school events, and connecting with the community. In addition, the willingness and ability to innovate successfully in the classroom is



strongly and positively associated with educator's self-efficacy as an instructional leader (Berry et al., 2010).

According to Smith et al. (2017), some educators have had considerable training in how to facilitate group planning and lesson study groups, skills that would greatly enhance the success of the school and common planning times. On the other hand, educators' involvement in instructional management negatively correlates with the principals' perceived dedication and satisfaction (Liu & Werblow, 2019). As an instructor in the classroom, educators want to be more active in instructional management, which poses a conundrum. On the other hand, their participation is linked to unhappiness among the principals. (Liu & Werblow, 2019). Educators who were not trusted by their principals, coaches, or facilitators to go off-script were more likely to feel professionally undermined or burnt out. As a result, they spoke less positively about formal leadership in their schools and were less enthusiastic about staying in their current positions (Berry et al., 2010). Empowering educators to function as self-sufficient professionals and leaders develops a sense of professional pride and confidence, which is conducive to good teaching (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). According to Berry et al. (2010), educators require more tools and opportunities than ever to adjust curriculum and instructional practices due to the diversity of learners entering classrooms.

#### *Evaluation and supervision of instruction*

Educators rarely open their doors to one another in the classroom; however, they make up for it by discussing their classroom experiences or other educational challenges (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016; Zwart et al., 2009). According to Smith et al. (2017), educators should monitor educator leaders in their classrooms as a strategy to improve instructional practice.

Educator leaders were more proactive in creating instructional strategies and picking learner grading or assessment practices (Ingersoll et al., 2018), but less powerful in setting the budget or employing new educators (Ingersoll et al., 2018). In addition, while educator leadership roles in the classroom have increased in recent years, educators' power to influence peers is limited due to the demand in school cultures for educators to maintain completely egalitarian working relationships and resistance from administrators (Berry et al., 2010).

#### *Monitoring of learner progress*

Due to the failure of positional leadership to improve schools prior to COVID-19, more emphasis is being placed on promoting the concept of shared and distributed leadership in schools (Sharar & Nawab, 2020). Sharar and Nawab (2020) further assert that because of their intimate engagement, personal relationships, and interaction with learners, educators play a crucial role in school reform and learners' academic progress. It encourages educators to embrace educator leadership as a vital component of school improvement and active participation in school concerns outside of the classroom.

The educational leader may be responsible for developing assessments, administering assessments, scoring and analysing outcomes, and identifying and modifying instructional needs and priorities (Sharar & Nawab, 2020; Spillane &

Healey, 2010). Informal educator leaders make decisions on instructional materials and analyse learner performance data (Liu, 2021), whereas formal educator leaders make decisions on assessment policy, educator evaluation, data analysis, and parental communication.

#### *Protection of instruction time*

While the school may have a general instruction time policy, the educator is the one who enforces it in the classroom. When enough time is devoted to each subject, the educator is able to protect instructional time. According to Harrison and Killion (2007), Educators can serve as resource providers, instructional and curricular specialists, classroom supporters, learning co-ordinators, mentors, school leaders, data coaches, change catalysts, and, most importantly, learners (Chien, 2020). Efforts by educators to maximize teaching and learning time, provide classroom settings that allow for an acceptable pace of instruction, and enable learners to take charge of their own learning in age-appropriate ways are all examples of how they employ instructional time (Leithwood et al., 2020).

#### *Provision of incentives for learning*

Fryer (2013) presented a school-based randomised study conducted in over 200 New York City public schools to understand the influence of educator incentives. Educator incentives did not appear to promote learner achievement, attendance, or graduation, nor did they influence student or educator behaviour. According to Fryer (2013), educator incentives may lower learner attainment, particularly in larger schools in the United States. However, incentive systems in developing countries have proven to be effective in promoting achievement (Fryer, 2013).

#### *Promotion of professional development*

Educators, who are at the centre of the educational process, have the knowledge and skills to direct their own professional development. However, gaining access to that knowledge necessitates identifying, developing, and nurturing educator leaders. In the opposite direction, empowering and nurturing educator leadership seems prudent by providing the resources, culture, and structures necessary for success. One structure for nurturing educator leadership is for educators to lead professional development events (Ghamrawi, 2013). In fact, to ensure the sustainability of school reform, one can tap into the creativity of educators and allow them to speed up school improvement. According to Ghamrawi (2013), the study's findings highlight resonant school gains and the programme's potential to develop not only educator leadership but also learner leadership.

## **6. Conclusion**

Instructional leadership is fluid, distributed, expertise-based, and shared, rather than the monopoly of any one person or individual. Educators have various skills and expertise, and if given the opportunity, they can take on effective instructional leadership roles in schools and capitalise on their skills and expertise. Successful educators are intimately familiar with both the content they must teach learners and the context of the community they serve. Allowing educators to serve as instructional leaders in their schools permits them to bring their unique knowledge to bear in meeting learner needs. This can be helpful in tailoring and

streamlining services for learners and families in high-needs schools and developing policies during and post COVID-19 that can be sustained over time. In sum, this study recommends that strengthened instructional leadership practices within schools can enhance the managing of education systems and provide a basis for developing post-pandemic school management policies.

This study experiences various limitations. Firstly, this study used a systematic literature review approach, making it collective in nature. Future studies can adopt a meta-analytical approach, which can generate more specific outcomes by synthesising empirical data. Secondly, the review of existing literature excludes practitioner's literature, government gazettes and published reports. Future studies can rely on an extended body of knowledge and data sources.

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