Shifting the Role of Egyptian School Principals: A Deep Investigation of their Instructional Leadership Behaviors

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Abstract
The main purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of their school principals' instructional leadership, and the gender impact might have on those perceptions. The principal instructional management rating scale: PIMRS (short version) (Hallinger, 1982, 1987, 1994, & Hallinger, et al, 2015) was used to collect data from 604 teachers for measuring principals' practices of instructional leadership in Egyptian schools. The main results indicated substantially a low level of school principals' demonstration of the instructional leadership behaviors as perceived from their teachers. There were significant differences based on gender, the results showed the female teachers perceive their school principals more administrating the instructional leadership behaviors than male teachers. This study contributes to the body of research on instructional leadership from the Egyptian cultural context.

Keywords: instructional leadership, PMIRS model, school principals, Egyptian Schools.
Paper type Research paper

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Introduction

It seems that everybody, at present, is not satisfied with school's outcomes, and just about everybody wants school change to fit the context of public expectations and needs. A powerful way of thinking about school change is to employ Fullan's insights into the dynamics of first and second order changes in school (1991, 1993, 2002). The first order changes in school involve redesigning the organization in its formal structure -as a bureaucratic organization-, essentially, those dealing with roles, schedules; the "mechanics" of the school. The second order changes refer to the technical core or philosophical understandings as those dealing with teaching and learning.

Fullan (1991, 1993) states that the first order changes may include the following: school based management and decision making; enhanced roles for teachers in instruction; setting aside blocks of time for teacher work during the instructional day; increasing resources for classroom use and for teacher development; lowering class sizes; implementing curriculum frameworks and focusing raising scores on standardized tests; and installing technology for teacher and student use. Second order changes would address and include understandings of which directly involve teaching and learning. Second order changes embed: increased definition of curriculum; mandated textbooks, standardized tests tightly aligned with curriculum, specification of teaching and evaluation, peer observation of practice, teacher study groups reviewing videotapes of their and other's practices as well as actual student work; connecting daily practice with conceptual frameworks; changing norms of educator interaction; and living a role of educator as inquirer and learner.

Likewise, research conducted by (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Lochmiller & Huggins, 2012) demonstrated that school principals could ensure philosophical changes in the instructional practices within the reform efforts. The claim is that the focus and energy of school principals' efforts should remain on the students not the organization that it makes sense to believe that school principals can facilitate or not facilitate the change in his /her organization. Research such as (Huang et al., 2012; Jacobson, 2012) indicated the following findings: (1) principal leadership contributes significantly to school effectiveness and success, (2) principal actions and behaviors affect student learning through developing teacher instruction and performance, and (3) effective principal practices include " but not limited to establishing a focus and vision, developing the capacity of school professionals, building a student-centered learning climate and fostering parent and community trusting relationships" (Huang et al., 2012, p. 73). This new modified role of principals as -instructional leadership- has led to a unified perception of a more ability required from the side of school principal to achieve the external accountability (Sahin, 2012).

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) framed principal instructional leadership behaviors in certain dimensions which have been used in over 100 studies of school principal instructional leadership. Those dimensions are: (1) defining the school mission, (2) managing the instructional program, and (3) promoting a positive climate. In the first dimension, school principal connects the vision of the school within the formal and informal activities which articulates to achieve school's accountability and instructional improvement. It is the principal who is responsible "for ensuring that such a mission exists" (Hallinger & Lee, 2013, p. 306). The second dimension deals with much more than supervision and evaluation of instruction; it deals with "coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student progress" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2000, p. 57), which reflects managing the technical core. The third dimension associates with (1) "maintaining high visibility in order to communicate priorities and model expectations, (2) creating a reward system that reinforces academic achievement and productive effort, (3) establishing clear, explicit standards that embody the school's expectations of students, (4) protecting instructional time, and (5) selecting and participating in high-quality staff development programs consist with the school mission" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2000, pp. 58-59).

In this perspective, Andrews and Soder (1987) provided some behaviors of how principal manages the instructional progress by being resource provider, instructional resource, and communicator. Lochmiller and Huggins (2012) cited more dimensions of principal instructional leadership, for example, shaping the conditions in schools, structuring the instructional program, ensuring accountability among students and teachers, and supporting teachers' work. Darling-Hammond (2010) summarized the actions of instructional leadership by involving principal in working with classroom teachers to improve instruction, providing resources and professional development aimed at improvements in instructional capacity, coordination of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, regular monitoring of students and teachers performance, and cultivation of a school culture focused on improvements in teaching and learning.

Viviano (2012) listed some instructional standards that administrators of school should acquire to empower teachers to improve their pedagogy and content- subject matter; (1) advancing knowledge of subject matter which leadership makes sure teachers foster a learning environment rich in differentiated instruction, conceptual learning, experiential learning, performance based learning, and one which includes rigorous academic integration, (2) managing and balancing multiple life roles reflects that school leaders model for teachers' development in student's self-awareness, character, leadership, and civic values and ethics, along with teaching socially acceptable behaviors, and last but not least (3) contributions to the educational process reports that school leader should encourage teachers to contribute at least locally to the educational process by staying current with new teaching initiatives for advancement in their field and the field of pedagogy.

O'Donnell & White (2005) suggested some skills that principals should acquire towards a developmental perspective on assessment leadership for principals to enhance instructional standards; (1) skills of working with teachers to promote school learning, (2) skills of encouraging collaboration among teachers, particularly in lower socio-economic status schools; and (3) skills of comprehensively assessing their own instructional leadership behaviors.

In Egypt, at the official and legislative level, the instructional leadership is considered as the duty and responsibility of the school principal. School principal is the responsible for the development of curricula, creating a positive school climate for school personnel, and involving teachers in the process of setting goals and activities necessary for professional growth (The Ministry of Education, 2004).

Despite the efforts made in Egypt for developing school principals' capabilities to improve and enforce students' learning, the reality indicates that these efforts have not met the needs, the Global Competitiveness Report (2013-2014) indicated that Egypt came in last among countries in the quality of basic education (World Economic Forum, 2013).

Most studies of the Egyptian Studies in recent years agreed that there is common dissatisfaction of the educational system, regarding the weakness in the quality of students' learning in public schools, as well as general lack of satisfaction with the educational service provided by the Egyptian school, and the low level of its graduates (Azab , 2010.116). Moreover, the results of the strategic plan for education reform in Egypt (2007 - 2012) revealed that there is a relative decline of the quality of the educational process outputs, and a lack of modern evaluation systems, as well as the weakness of the efficiency and effectiveness of school leadership to meet the reform requirements (strategic plan for education in Egypt, 2007). The results indicated also there is a need for technical qualification and training of high-level school leaders to play an effective role as school leadership, especially in light of the weakness of the leadership practices and lack of attention to the necessary capacity building for school principals (Abdul Salam, 2009; Ahmed, 2009 ; Husseini & Ahmed, 2005).

Results of many Egyptian studies indicated the lack of instructional leadership of school principal in most Egyptian schools, such as lack of teacher's empowerment, lack of teacher's participation in school decision-making, weakness of the practice shared leadership of school principals and poor efficiency of school leaders to meet the reform requirements. (Al-Mahdy 2007, Husseini and Ahmed, 2005, Abdul Salam, 2009, Al-Mahdy, 2012)

In the light of previous research the expectations is heavily placed upon school principal as instructional leadership for enhancing interior and external accountability for students and teachers learning. It is the responsibility of front line leadership to work with teachers to promote school teaching and learning process by modifying, assessing, monitoring, coaching, managing, coordinating, and developing well instruction. Meanwhile, due to the fact that there is a lack of research that focuses on the impact of school principal as instructional leadership on school effectiveness and students achievement in Egypt, this study aims to investigate and analyze the demonstration of school principals of instructional behaviors from the perceptions of teachers. Moreover, it is expected that the findings of this study will lighten the road of educational high-stakes accountability to identify new sets of leadership knowledge and skills to be acquired in achieving principals' contribution in students learning.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the degree of demonstration of Egyptian school principals the instructional leadership behaviors contained in the (The principal instructional management rating scale: PIMRS (Hallinger, 1987, 1994, Hallinger et al, 2015) we use a short form as perceived by teachers. This study is guided by two descriptive data questions: (1) To what degree are Egyptian school principals seen to demonstrate instructional

leadership behaviors in regard to (PIMRS) as perceived by their teachers? (2) To what extent, if any, are there significant differences among Male & Female Teachers regarding the dimensions of the PIMRS?

Significance of the Study

Unfortunately, Egyptian principals- as other principals around the world- still maintain the traditional responsibilities of their position and most of their time is consumed in the administrative tasks such as budget builder, clerk and paper issues and discipline matters. Therefore, it is expected that by identifying and prioritizing instructional leadership behaviors and focusing on their time and instructional activities, school principals themselves could highly be committed to instruct all students and to develop teachers' professional growth. Also, this study is expected to contribute to the current literature on principal instructional leadership towards increasing and improving school effectiveness and building learning communities.

Moreover, this study contributes by empirical data on exploring the principal instructional leadership in non-Western country, which highlights the potential of exploring the role of principal in students learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013).

Methodology

Research Design

For the purpose of this study, a quantitative approach is implemented using The principal instructional management rating scale: (Hallinger, 1982, 1987, 1994, Hallinger, et al, 2015), the researchers employed PIMRS.

For Egyptian Participants, the PIMRS-Short form (22 items) was translated into Arabic. This Arabic version was constructed in the same format as the English version, and was given to two language experts for back translation. A corrected final version of the Questionnaire was administered to a group of school teachers in Egypt; the (PIMRS) provides perceptions of the staff relating to specific practices observed about the behaviors of school principal with regard to three dimensions: Creating a School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Developing a Positive School Learning Climate. The (PIMRS) utilizes a five-point, forced Likert scale ranging from 1 = almost never to 5 = almost always. The statements of the short form of PIMRS are categorized into representative groups:

1. Items 1-5 focus on the principal role in Creating a School Mission
2. Items 6-12 assess on the principal role in managing the instructional program
3. Items 13-22 determine the participants' perceptions in regards to the principal role in developing a Positive School Learning Climate. (Hallinger & et al, 2015)

The internal consistency of the variables was analyzed using Cronbach alpha. Table (1) illustrates the results of internal consistency analysis, in the Arabic version of the questionnaire:

Table 1. Internal Consistency Analysis for (PIMRS: short form)

Subscales PIMRS Subscales	Cronbach's alpha	1	2	3
Creating a School Mission	0.88	1		
Managing the Instructional Program	0.84	.82**	1	
Developing a Positive School Learning Climate	0.92	.84**	.87**	1
One Factor Solution	0.96	.92**	.92**	.97**

Participants

The population of this study includes public school teachers in Cairo, Egypt. We surveyed a convenient sample of 604 teachers during the 2014-2015 school years. 45.8 per cent of teachers were male and 54.2 per cent were female. The majority of the respondents (81%) are government school teachers and the remaining 19% teach in private schools. More than half of the teachers (59.6 %) have job title as a teacher, the remaining (40.4%) having head teachers' title. With regard of the educational levels taught by these teachers 66.7 % taught Grades 1 to 6, 33.3 % taught Grades 7 to 9 grade levels.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine school teachers' perceptions regarding school principals' practices of the instructional leadership dimensions, and the impact of demographic differences on their perception. This was a quantitative study using descriptive statistical analysis to address three research questions.

Q.1. To what degree are Egyptian school principals seen to demonstrate instructional leadership behaviors in regard to PIMRS as perceived by their teachers?

To address this question, Table (2) displays the descriptive statistics for all responses of (604) teachers on the three dimensions of The PIMRS. Participants responded to 22 statements on the PIMRS (short form) based on their level of agreement (1 = *Almost Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *frequently*, 5 *Almost Always*). Mean scores were calculated for the overall response and for each dimension of PIMRS questionnaire.

Table 2. Questionnaire Overall and Dimension Mean Scores.

All Responses	Overall	Creating a School Mission	Managing the Instructional Program	Developing a Positive School Learning Climate
Mean	2.19	2.27	2.23	2.11
SD	0.51	0.65	0.50	0.60

N= 604

Table (2) contains the overall questionnaire mean scores and individual dimension mean scores by all respondents participating in the study. Based on the compilation of means for all respondents to the survey, the overall mean score is (M=2.19). Table (2) displays mean scores for individual dimension ranging from the lowest rated dimension (M=2.11) for Developing a Positive School Learning Climate to the highest rated dimension (M=2.27) for Creating School Mission. Table (2) shows that the Egyptian teachers have low mean scores overall and in all three dimensions of the questionnaire.

Data from this table are significant because they tell us that school teachers in Egypt, feel that their school principals don't demonstrate the instructional leadership behaviors, and they need more education to become instructional leaders. The third dimension titled "Developing a Positive School Learning Climate" (M=2.11) was the lowest rated dimension, this indicates that the school climate in Egyptian school doesn't support the learning in school.

Q.2. To what extent, if any, are there significant differences among Male & Female Teachers regarding the dimensions of the PIMRS?

To address this question, SPSS software was utilized to perform T-Test and report the findings.

Table (3). T-tests for PIMRS (short version) by Gender.

	Male teachers		Female teachers		T- Value	df	P
PIMRS Dimensions	M	SD	M	SD			
Creating a School Mission	2.08	0.48	2.46	0.75	-3.95	602	0.00**
Managing the Instructional Program	2.12	0.40	2.35	0.57	-3.13	602	0.00**
Developing a Positive School Learning Climate	1.94	0.38	2.29	0.72	-4.00	602	0.00**

Note: ** Significant at 0.01

Table (3) shows that the (T) value is statistically significant. This indicates that there were statistically significant differences between male and female teachers regarding the dimensions of the PIMRS in favor of female teachers. Thus, the answer to the second question is: There are statistically significant differences at (0.01) level between male & female teachers in the Egypt regarding the dimensions of the PIMRS in favor of female teachers.

Discussion & Conclusion

The findings from this study indicated substantially a low level of school principals' demonstration of the instructional leadership behaviors as perceived from their teachers. In this point, we expected these low mean scores; although Egyptian principals recognize the importance of the instructional leadership responsibilities, in reality, Egyptian instructional leadership behaviors are seldom practiced, and most of their time is spent in managing school.

Findings of this study also derived from single source which was obtained from the teachers –report ratings, and didn't derived from principal self –report which is often subject to inflation and question the validations of findings. This issue was taken in consideration while choosing the sample of this study because most of principals' self-report ratings of instructional leadership studies were higher than rating obtained from teachers.

Moreover, dimension titled "Developing a Positive School Learning Climate" was the lowest rated dimension, which could reflect that principals are not highly committed to build a learning culture and organize schools structurally so that they become true learning communities. Whereas, the dimension titled "Creating a School Mission" got the highest mean, this dimension of creating a shared sense of purpose in the school could be interpreted as the strategies and activities that happen by the school development committee to sustain an acceptable level of performance consistent with school mission.

The mean of the dimension "Managing the Instructional Program" was lower than the mean of the dimension "Creating a School Mission". This finding is important in that the effect of the mission dimension strongly substantiated by research on instructional leadership in education. This reflects the low level of engagement of school principal in managing the instructional program which develops teachers' professional growth, decisions made regarding schooling effectiveness, and contents of curriculum and testing.

In regarding the differences among male and female, the results showed the female teachers perceive their school principals more administrating the instructional leadership behaviors than male teachers. Results from studies in other countries produced similar results, *Al-Mahdy & Al-kiyumi, (2015)* for example reached to the same result in Oman. This could be reflected that the time that female principals spend in the technical functions is more than males do (Fullan, 1991), and they as female principals have less issues in management functions such as problem solving that male principals deal.

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