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Research paper

Instructional Leadership in Malaysia

Roslizam Hassan*[1], Jamilah Ahmad[2] and Yusof Boon[3]

[1]Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
[2]Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
[3]Associate Professor, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education
**Corresponding Author E-mail: zamhassan@yahoo.com*

Abstract

Leadership of school leaders regardless principals or headmasters is among the key factors that can affect the academic achievement of students directly or indirectly. Based on previous research, a strong relationship between student achievement and leadership of school leaders was proven. The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE) has outlined three approaches to improving student achievement through the improvement of school leaders' performance. One of the approaches is school leaders should act as instructional leaders who are actively involved in teacher development activities by planning, coordinating and evaluating the teaching and learning process (T&L) at school. This concept paper will discuss several matters related to instructional leadership such as background and development of instructional leadership, instructional leadership definitions, the development of instructional leadership concepts, instructional leadership models and the issues and challenges that exist in implementing this leadership styles. The analysis was done in the context of Malaysia and abroad. The paper is written based on extensive secondary data analysis. After analyzing matters relating to instructional leadership, it can be concluded that instructional leadership is a form of leadership that every school leader needs to practice for excellence achievements in a school. With a lot of challenges nowadays, it needs to be addressed so that the direction of the school is on the right track and students' achievement can be enhanced.

Keywords: *concept development; definition; instructional leadership; issues and challenges in executing instructional leadership; literature research; model*

1. Introduction

Education in Malaysia has been developing rapidly since this nation gained independence six decades ago. Malaysia government has always been concerned by taking initiatives to ensure our education system is comparable to those of developed countries while being up to date with the current changes that would suit global demand. The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Yang Amat Berhormat Dato' Seri Haji Mohd. Najib Bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak is also taking the same approach that was taken by the previous leaders by upholding Malaysian education towards advancement and competitiveness.

On the 11th of July 2009, The Prime Minister of Malaysia had announced six National Key Result Areas (NKRA) which is a Malaysian government initiative to fulfill the needs and demands of people after winning the 12th general election in 2008. The six areas are reducing crime rates, fighting corruption, improving student outcomes, raising living standards of low-income households, improving rural basic infrastructure and improving urban public transport (1).

Under the third NKRA or also known as Education NKRA, there are four sub-NKRA which explains in detail on the function of the particular NKRA. The four sub-NKRA are pre-school and early childcare, screening of literacy and numeracy skills (LINUS), identifying and rewarding High-Performing Schools and a new deal for school leaders who succeeded to improve school's excellence. Based on this sub-NKRA, it is obvious especially in the fourth NKRA that the aspect of principals' leadership is a vital element in upholding the education system in Malaysia. The fourth sub-NKRA also stated that school leaders are proven to help enhancing students' academic achievement (1). In other word, school leaders do play a role in improving students' academic achievement both directly and indirectly (Jackson, Davis, Abeel, & Bordonaro, 2000; Marzano, 2003). In addition, there is a research that shows that there is a strong correlation between students' academic achievement and the school leaders' leadership (4).

Scholars, education practitioners and lawmakers have reached to a consensus stating that the school leaders' leadership is the main contributor in enhancing the performance and excellence of a school system (Fullan, 2007; Harris, 2013; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). They also added that the leadership of the school leaders contributes to a better school performance while enhancing students' academic achievement (Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Leithwood, & Kington, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). The relationship between school leadership and students' academic achievement has also been stated specifically by Bogler (2005) and Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) where they stated that the leadership style of a school leader can influence various elements in the school environment including the attitude of teachers and staffs, teaching and learning process and students' academic achievement.

Therefore, Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has underlined three approaches to enhance students' success through the enhancement of school leaders' performance. The first approach is where the school leaders need to act as an instructional leader who is actively involved in teachers' development through planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and learning (T&L) process

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in school. Secondly, the school leaders act as the main agent of change in ensuring the vision and mission can be realized parallel to the school's goal for students' success. Finally, school leaders have to create a conducive school environment and supports T&L process inside and outside classroom (13).
In a preliminary report of the Malaysia Educational Blueprint 2013-2025, it is highlighted that students' success can be increased up to 20 percent if school leaders practice instructional leadership. This report also suggests that the responsibility as instructional leaders does not only lie on the school leaders only; the assistant principal, head of department and head of committee should also trained and be given trust to be instructional leaders (14). Based on this brief description, it is proven that instructional leadership is a leadership model that is still relevant and trusted to bring schools under the ministry of education to keep moving forward in empowering students' academic achievement and personality to produce quality human capital.

2. Definition of Instructional Leadership

The word "instructional" is originated from the word "instruction" which means teaching. In the context of school and daily usage, the term "teaching" is more commonly used than the term "instructional" because of its exclusivity of meaning in the English language. Hence, the term "instructional leadership" is more commonly used than "teaching leadership" although both carry the same meaning, which is any action or activity executed by the school leader to enhance T&L process (15). Various definition of instructional leadership has been stated by many researchers and scholars in educational leadership. One of them is a type of leadership that affect school's development (16) and a leadership that uses knowledge in solving academic problems and educating teachers to know their roles to realize the school goal (17).
Drake and Roe (2002) defines instructional leadership as any effort towards encouraging and supporting parties that are involved in the T&L process to achieve school goal and developing a strong school social system. According to Hallinger and Murphy (1985a), instructional leadership is any activity executed by the school administration in hope to improve the success of T&L process and school development. Instructional leadership is also referred as a chain of action taken by school leaders aiming to enhance students' learning development (20) and students' learning condition in school (21).
Sisman (2016) refers to instructional leadership as the power and behavior used by school leaders, teachers and school supervisor to affect individuals and situation in school. The most important aspect that differentiates instructional leadership and other educational leadership is that it focuses more on the T&L process in school. He added that there are five behaviors of instructional leadership that should be practiced by school leaders which are (1) identifying and sharing school objective, (2) administrating curriculum and instructional process, (3) evaluating instructional process and students' academic achievement, (4) supporting teachers while enhancing their quality and (5) creating positive learning environment and school climate.
On the other hand, Hallinger (2011, 2000, 1987) stated that instructional leadership is an effort executed by school leaders to improve T&L process that involves teachers, parents, students and a combination of planning, organization, facilities and school culture. School leaders need to ensure each individual in school cooperates and helps one another in executing the best educational program. Based on this definition, three main dimensions of instructional leadership are created which are defining goal, organizing instructional program and encouraging school climate that will be the main basis in this concept paper.

3. Developing the Concept of Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership has gained the attention of many educational researchers and lawmakers since more than three decades ago and it started with a research on effective school (Bossert et al., 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a, 1987; Smith & Piele, 2006; Southworth, 2002). Instructional leadership starts in between late 1970's and early 1980s with the emergence of researches that compare effective primary school and non-effective primary school for poor children in the northern parts of America.
Before the existence of researches related to school leaders, school-related researches only focused on socioeconomic status, social background and race as the factors of a student's success. But after the emergence of researches on effective school, the focus was shifted to identifying characteristics and practices of the school leaders in improving students' academic achievement (27,30). Around 1980's, researches on school leaders practicing instructional leadership grew vigorously (Bossert et al., 1982; Dwyer, 1985; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985b; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). According to several education scholars, there are only two leadership models that mostly dominated school or other educational institution which are instructional and transformational leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Robinson *et al*., 2008). This proves that even if the age of leadership has passed three decades, it is still relevant to be practiced in school until today.
The early development of instructional leadership among school leaders in Malaysia started in early 1980's. The Committee to Study Education Standard in Schools reported that school leaders should be responsible towards students' academic achievement in school and suggested a shift on the main task of principals or headmasters from school administration to instructional leaders (*Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia*, 1982). Starting from this report, instructional leadership began to be implemented in schools around Malaysia.
Until today, even this leadership has reached more than 30 years of age, it is still used and relevant in developing schools and improving students' academic achievement. Ministry of Education Malaysia and all State Education Department make instructional leadership as the key performance indicator (KPI) that needs to be achieved successfully. Some education department uses the term "empowering instructional leadership" since instructional leadership has been long introduced and spread in schools, but there are a number of school leaders who are still lacking in practicing it. School leaders were found to be more focused on administrative business and school management. With this empowerment approach, it is hoped that school teachers could practice it again and make is a school culture for students' excellence.

4. Instructional Leadership Models

Various instructional leadership models have been developed by education scholars to define dimensions and functions or roles that can be practiced by school leaders in executing their responsibilities as an instructional leader. For this subtopic, the researcher presents three main instructional leadership models that are frequently discussed in academic researches which are Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model (1990), Weber's Instructional Leadership Model (1996) and Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model (2011).

4.1. Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model (1990)

Murphy (1990) has created a framework on instructional leadership based on his researches on school efficacy and improvement, staff development and organization changes. Based on his re-

search, he explained that there are four dimensions and 16 functions that need to be practiced by an instructional leader. Figure 1 shows Instructional Leadership Model developed by Murphy (1990). Based on the figure, the first dimension of instructional leadership is creating mission and goal in which these will act as the foundation in developing shared vision and goal, and ensuring all activities and efforts executed by school are heading towards that vision and goal. Murphy had divided this dimension into two main functions which are firstly, to construct school goal and secondly, to spread school goal. According to Murphy (1990), students' academic achievement becomes the basis or foundation of school goal construction. The constructed school goal needs to be shared frequently whether formally or informally to students, parents and teachers to make sure all activities that are carried out in school are heading towards the goal that was constructed together.

The second dimension is learning management that highlights on the role of school leaders' management in administrating T&L process in school. This dimension involves five functions in particular which are (1) promoting quality education, (2) supervising and evaluating learning, (3) allocating and protecting instructional period, (4) coordinating curriculum and (5) monitoring students' progress. Instructional leader may encourage quality teaching through discussions with teachers in curriculum meetings, teachers' instructional evaluation, visits to classroom like learning walk, discussion during observation session and many more. In addition, school leaders should protect instructional period properly through a suitable procedure. Instructional leaders and teachers should discuss together on coordinating school curriculum through goal and objectives adjustments to fulfill current demand of the national curriculum. Moreover, instructional leaders should also always monitor students' progress by using evaluation data so that the goal and teachers' approaches during the T&L process can be modified according to students' needs.

The third dimension is promoting academic learning climate which refers to school leaders' action that could influence norms, beliefs and attitudes of teachers, students and parents of a school (James & Balasandran, 2013). This dimension encompasses four functions which include (1) creating positive standards and hope, (2) maintaining high visibility, (3) providing incentives for teachers and students, and (4) promoting professional development. According to Murphy (1990), principals or headmasters can instill conducive school learning climate development through T&L process by setting positive standards and hopes, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers and promoting professional development.

The fourth dimension which is to create friendly and supportive school environment explains the instructional leaders' role to create an organization structure and enhancing processes that would support T&L executions (James & Balasandran, 2013). Principals and headmasters who succeeded to practice this dimension are able to create safe and organized learning environment (first function), providing opportunities for meaningful students' involvements (second function), instilling cooperation and cohesiveness among staffs (third function), outsourcing foreign sources to support school goal (fourth function) and forming relationship between homes and school (fifth function).

However, this leadership model has its flaws. According to Alig-Mielcarek (2003), Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model has flaws as compared to the Instructional Leadership Model constructed by Hallinger (2011). This Instructional Leadership Model is not tested empirically in schools although this model is created based on literature research and deep observation by Murphy towards school leadership.

4.2. Weber's Instructional Leadership Model (1996)

Weber (1996), an expert of collaborative concept in management field had identified five dimensions in instructional leadership framework. The five dimensions are as shown in Figure 2. The first dimension is defining school mission. Weber explained that defining school mission is a dynamic process that demands cooperation and energy mobilization of all parties including leaders

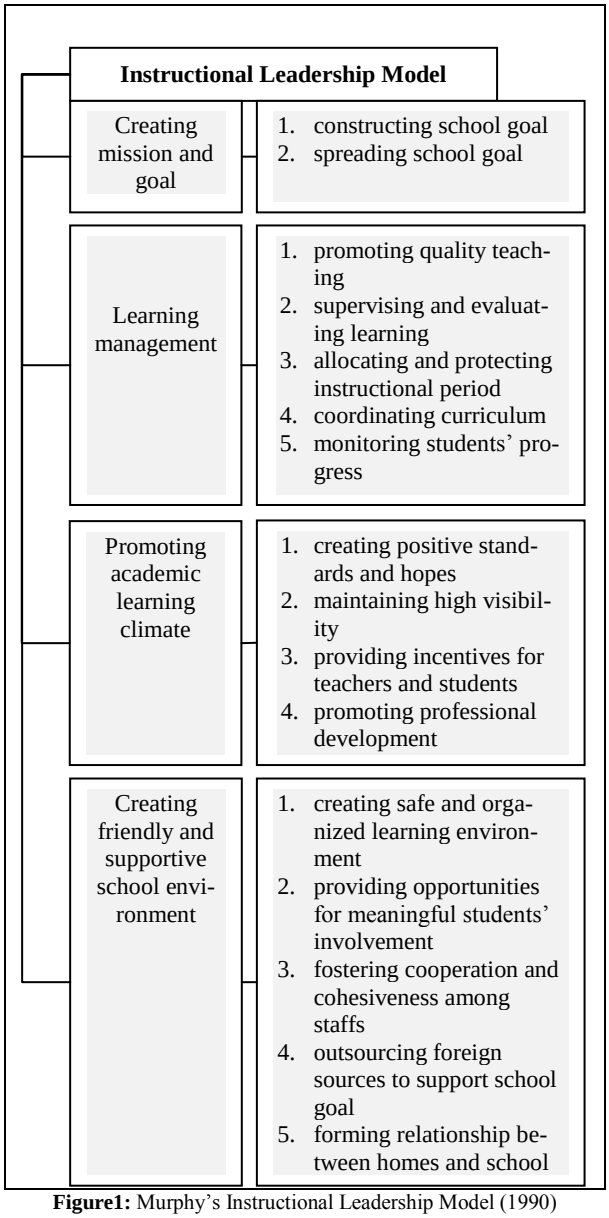


Figure1: Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model (1990)

Staffs, teachers, students and parents to create a clear, honest and achievable mission. The second dimension is managing curriculum and learning. According to Weber, the effort of managing curriculum and learning should be in accordance to the school mission. Instructional leaders should have the skills to guide teachers in the aspect of T&L process whether inside or outside classroom so that students could get the best learning experience. School leaders should also assist teachers to use best practices to enable students to achieve academic achievement goal that has been set by the school.

The third dimension is promoting positive learning climate. To ensure that this dimension is achieved, school leaders should spread school goal widely, setting high achievement goal among students, creating an organized learning condition and improving teachers' commitment level in accomplishing their tasks. The fourth dimension is observing and improving teaching quality. Through this dimension, school leaders may execute observation of teachers' teaching activity as it is an interaction opportunity between teachers and school leaders. This observation is a professional development opportunity for both parties in sharing best practices,

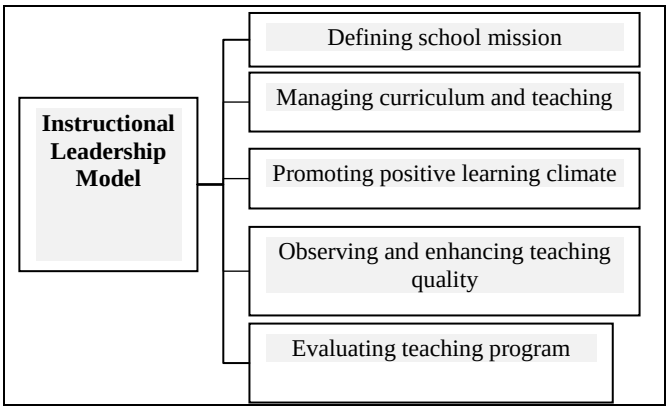


Figure 2: Weber's Instructional Leadership Model (1996)

new knowledge and useful experience that are hard to find in reading materials. The fifth dimension is evaluating teaching program. Instructional leaders are actuators and pioneers in contributing ideas for planning, designing, administrating and analyzing various kinds of evaluation in evaluating the effectiveness of a curriculum. Continuous evaluation of these curriculum programs would enable teachers to fulfill students' learning needs effectively because improvement will be made based on the evaluation.

Nonetheless, this model has its flaws. According to Alig-Mielcarek (2003), although Weber's Instructional Leadership Model (1996) is a combination of research findings on leadership sharing and teachers' ability to create schools that prioritize students' academic achievement, this model has not been empirically tested as compared to Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model (2011) and it cannot be proven if there is a positive correlation between the five dimensions in this model and students' academic achievement.

4.3. Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model (2011)

Hallinger (2011) underlined three dimensions and 10 instructional leadership functions in evaluating school leaders' instructional leadership level. The three dimensions are defining school goal, managing instructional program and promoting school climate. These three dimensions comprises 10 functions that explain in detail the roles and tasks of instructional leaders in school. This leadership model is as shown in Figure 3.

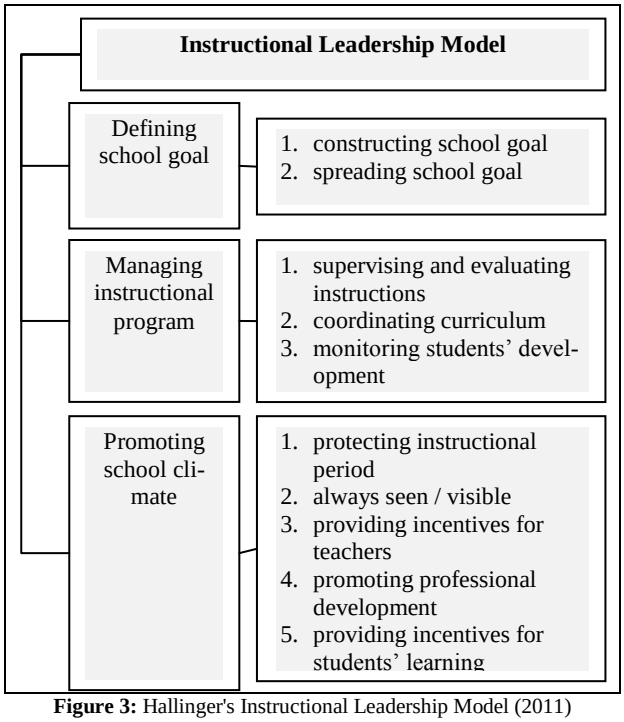


Figure 3: Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model (2011)

The first dimension, defining school goal, comprises two functions which are (1) constructing school goal and (2) spreading school goal. The second dimension is managing instructional program. This dimension has three functions which are (1) supervising and evaluating instructions, (2) coordinating curriculum and (3) monitoring students' development. The third dimension is promoting school climate which comprises five functions which are (1) protecting instructional period, (2) always seen or visible, (3) providing incentives for teachers, (4) promoting professional development and (5) providing incentives for students' learning. Further explanation regarding this dimension and its functions will be stated in the next topic.

Based on the three models that have been discussed, this concept paper has chosen the Instructional Leadership Model constructed by Hallinger (2011) as the best model because of several reasons. Firstly, it is because of the strength of the model. Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model has been tested empirically in many researches regarding instructional leadership and has the widest usage in measuring a school leader's instructional leadership level (39,41–43). Secondly, this model has created a research instrument that is strong, stable and has become one of the research instruments that has been widely used in the area of school leadership and management which is "Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale" (PIMRS) (36,41,43–45).

This instrument has been used numerous times in studying school leaders' instructional leadership in the past 30 years and it is still relevant until today. Among the researches, local and international, that uses this instrument include Ahmad (2014); Andi (2006); Elangkumaran (2012); Fulton (2009); Gedik and Bellibas (2015); Gurley *et al*. (2016); Hallinger (2005, 2011); Hallinger *et al*. (2015); Hallinger, Dongyu, and Wang (2016); Hallinger and Murphy (1987); Jameela and Jainabee (2011); Latip (2007); Masitah and Khaidir (2015); Mohd and Aziz (2014); Mohd (2009); Nor and Haris (2013); Pettiegrew (2013); Rahimi and Yusri (2015); Robinson et al. (2008); Shafinaz, Chua, Hussein, and Shahrin (2008) and Zakaria (2016). Hallinger (2011) has written a meta-analysis journal that studies the uses of PIMRS throughout these three decades which involves 130 philosophical doctorate and educational theses, and based on his study on all the theses, he suggested that PIMRS instrument is the strongest, most stable and has the highest reliability and validity in studying instructional leadership in school.

Other than the reasons stated above, the choice of this model is also made based on the strengths and weaknesses of the three instructional leadership models that had been discussed previously. Detailed description on the strengths and weaknesses of the three instructional leadership models are as shown in Table 1. Based on all the arguments, choosing Hallinger's Leadership Model as the best model to fulfill the needs and demands of instructional leadership is seen to be the most accurate.

Table 1 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Instructional Leadership Models

Murphy (1990)	*Strength:* This model is created based on deep researches on various literature studies regarding instructional leadership and observations on its executions in schools. Based on the study, it produced the most dimensions and functions compared to the other models which comprises four dimensions and 16 functions (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003). *Weakness:* Not empirically tested and no questionnaire instrument was created from this model (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003).
Weber (1996)	*Strength*: This model implemented research findings on leadership sharing and teachers' ability to create schools that highlight academic field and focus on the improvement of all students' academic achievement. (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003). *Weakness:* This model has not been empirically tested and it cannot be proven whether instructional leaders who practice this model can enhance students' academic achievement or vice

	versa (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003).
Hallinger (2011)	*Strength:* This model is constructed based on a questionnaire and observations towards 10 schools to evaluate school leaders' instructional leadership behavior. Hallinger had collected data on the "behaviors" from the research respondents who are the school leaders, school staff and their district education supervisor (James & Balasandran, 2013). This model has been tested in many empirical studies and has been used widely in measuring a school leader's instructional leadership level (39,41–43). This model creates a strong and stabil instrument which has become one of the most widely used research instrument in the field of leadership and education management. The instrument is "Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale" (PIMRS) (36,41,43–45).

5. Dimensions and Functions in Hallinger's Instructional Leadership Model (2011)

The instructional leadership model constructed by Hallinger (2011) comprises three dimensions which are defining school goal, managing instructional program and promoting school climate. Detailed explanation on these dimensions are as follows.

5.1 Defining School Goal

The dimension of defining school goal has two functions as stated previously which are constructing school goal and spreading it (Hallinger, 2011; 2000; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Through this dimension, the main role of school leaders is to set school goal. School leaders should know what to be achieved by the school and the direction they are heading to. A school which have no direction in educational process has no criteria to measure whether they have succeeded in executing the process or not (17). This dimension focuses on leaders' role in carrying out their responsibilities together with the people under them to ensure the school has clear and measurable goal and has a timeline for students' academic progress. Leaders are also responsible to clarify the constructed goal so that all parties are aware of it and this could ease supports and aids from the school community to ensure the goal is achieved (Hallinger, 2005).

Based on this model, the process of constructing goal is seen as less critical than its outcome. The goal may be constructed by the school leader, or collaboratively with other school staffs. However, it is appropriate to question if the school has a clear goal that would enable everyone in the school community to support and cooperate towards the goal. This is because sometimes, there is a blurry, confusing and even conflicting goal that would lead to difficulty in getting the desired outcome based on the goal that has been set (Hallinger, 2011; 2000; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987).

The role of instructional leaders in defining school goal can be seen more clearly in a research done by Hallinger and Murphy (1986) on an effective primary school in California. From the interview with the school leader and teachers, six characteristics that a school leader should have in defining school goal had been summarized. Firstly, the school's vision and mission should be clear and understandable for everyone in the school community. The goal should be written or displayed around school to ensure that everyone can see it easily and making them aware and concerned on the school's direction. Secondly, the school goal should focus on academic development based on the school needs and suitability. Thirdly, the school goal should be all teachers' priority in doing their tasks. Fourth, the goal should be accepted and verified by all teachers in the school. Fifth, the goal should be excellently articulated by the leader and finally, the goal should be supported by everyone in the school community. Hence, the school leader himself should portray the best example in realizing the goal.

5.2 Managing Instructional Program

The second dimension is managing instructional program. This dimension focuses on controlling and coordinating things related to curriculum and teaching. According to James and Balasandran (2013), this dimension is the biggest task and challenge that school leaders have to face because the curriculum and teaching is the core function of a school. Failure in accomplishing the task of managing instructional program efficiently and effectively will cause failure in getting the desired outcome on students' academic achievement. There are three functions of this dimension which are firstly, supervising and evaluating instructions, secondly, coordinating curriculum and finally, monitoring students' progress (Hallinger, 2011; 2000; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987).

According to Hallinger (2011, 2000), the first function of this dimension, which is supervising and evaluating instruction, refers to the school leaders' initiative to ensure that the school goal can be fully translated and practiced in the process of T&L in the classroom. For the second function which is coordinating curriculum, school leaders should align teaching objectives with learning activities in classroom, assessment process and coordinating instructional program. School leaders should also assign several individuals who would be responsible in coordinating curriculum, analyzing students' examination result and making decisions to choose curriculum materials as teaching aids. Furthermore, the third function, which is monitoring students' progress, school leaders should hold a continuous discussion with teachers regarding students' academic development and achievement, giving specific opinions and initiate ways of improvements for the T&L process to enhance students' achievement.

Based on the explanation above, the second dimension needs active involvement of school leaders in boosting, supervising and monitoring T&L process in school. Therefore, school leaders should have the knowledge, experience and expertise in T&L and at the same time, committed to all school enhancement programs. Through this dimension, school leaders will be the expert in all instructional programs in school (26,27,31,63,64).

A research by Hallinger and Murphy (1986) towards an effective school in California found that the school teachers observed several behaviors of the headmaster that is said to be monitoring students' development. They observed that the headmaster was able to know the literacy and advancement level of all 650 students in the school. Although this behavior is not a requirement in instructional leadership, this reflects the headmaster's effort in monitoring students' progress other than managing teaching programs in the school.

5.3 Promoting School Climate

The third dimension is promoting school climate. There are five functions in this dimension which are (1) protecting instructional period, (2) always seen or visible, (3) providing incentives for teachers, (4) promoting professional development and (5) providing incentives for students' learning (Hallinger, 2011; 2000). Hallinger (2011, 2000) had modified leadership model and concept that was constructed with his partner which is Hallinger and Murphy's Instructional Leadership Model (1987, 1985). Nonetheless, after doing several validity and reliability tests, he dropped one of the six functions in the third dimension which is strengthening academic standard. Thus, for this latest leadership model, the dimension of promoting school climate only has five functions as stated above and it remains the same until today.

According to Hallinger (2011, 2000), the third dimension refers to norms and attitudes of teachers and students that affect learning process in school. School leaders should create a school climate, directly or indirectly, through their capability in maintaining visibility to ease communication, discussion and to provide platform to approach teachers and students, creating reward system to boost the school community's productivity towards enhancing students' academic achievement, creating clear standards comprising the

school's expectation for the students, protecting teaching period and taking part in development programs for the school community that are aligned with the school mission.

This dimension has the widest scope and purpose as compared to the two previous dimensions. This proves the view that an effective school will usually create an academic press through the development of high standards and expectations for students and teachers to excel in academic and learning (26,65). In the aspect of teaching, an effective school creates a "continuous development" culture, where every success in practicing a good deed that contributes to school development shall be rewarded (Barth, 1990; Glasman, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Mortimore, 1993; Purkey & Smith, 1983). The head master should also portray good examples in morals and practices that can create continuous development climate in the aspect of T&L (Dwyer, 1985).

6. Issues in Practicing Instructional Leadership

There are many researches that shows the existence of flaws in school leaders and challenges in practicing instructional leadership. This subtopic will explain in detail issues, weaknesses and challenges faced by school leaders in practicing instructional leadership. According to Heck and Hallinger (2010), there are many issues and weaknesses in practicing instructional leadership despite this leadership model has been a reference for school leadership researchers. The first issue is that this leadership model is hierarchical, which comprises top-down relationship of a school leader and teachers. Based on the practice of instructional leadership, school leaders will act as curriculum expert and supervisor of teaching process and curriculum. The top-down relationship between the expert or supervisor and teachers will create discomfort among teachers especially when the school leaders are intending to monitor the T&L process or while checking their work outcome (Goddard, 2003).

The second issue is difficulty of school leaders to be experts in all fields of teaching or curriculum (Hallinger, 2003). Hence, in this situation, school leaders should instill learning culture among the school community especially teachers so that all kinds of expertise in every teacher can be fully utilized by the school for the students' academic improvement. The third issue that other than being instructional leaders in school, they also have to attend to other tasks such as administrative business and this causes them to not have enough time to carry out their duty as instructional leaders (Cuban, 1983; Hallinger, 2003; Stronge, 1993). This situation is also supported by Goodwin, Cunningham, and Childress (2003) who stated that local social and community authorities often forces school leaders with many current demands on education. This causes imbalance in the issue of school management and leadership other than increasing confusion and complexity in carrying out the duties, where this could lead to decrease in moral and enthusiasm of the school leaders. Moreover, the community's high expectation towards the school leaders is adding more responsibilities to the leaders towards various demands of the society and this causes failure in accomplishing tasks and duties as instructional leaders (63,75).

School leaders' capability in practicing instructional leadership in enhancing students' academic achievement may also be declined. There are empirical evidences which stated that school leaders still failed to enhance students' learning quality even after practicing instructional leadership (Cuban, 1983; Hallinger, 2008). In another research, Leithwood (2012) found that students perceived that school leaders' role in improving their learning quality is low, which is between 12 to 25 percent, while the influence of outside environment and family factor contributes up to 50 percent of influence towards students' academic achievement (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010).

Since several decades ago, there was a pressure that demands school leaders to reduce management tasks and focus more on the tasks as instructional leaders. For school leaders who have left teaching for a long time (due to involvement in school management and administration), being involved again in the teaching and instructional field with the goal of enhancing teachers' instructional performance is surely a big challenge for them (Hallinger, 2003; Stronge, 1993). Hallinger (2011) also found that school leaders are always pressured to carry out responsibilities as instructional leaders fully because it was convinced to enhance students' academic achievement, yet the leaders are also expected fulfill other tasks such as school management and administrative business. Busyness in handling various management and administrative tasks is limiting school leaders to carry out their responsibilities as instructional leaders, especially in supervision tasks and monitoring teachers' T&L sessions. In the end, the supervision and monitoring of T&L tasks are shifted to assistant principals and heads of department (Hallinger, 2005).

Goodwin et al. (2003) has presented bureaucracy problem, social community pressure, negotiations between many parties and educational reforms that constantly happen had caused the headmasters' role as instructional leaders to be eradicated bit by bit to the extent that they perceived themselves as educators and not leaders. Their role as school leaders have also undergone big changes since the past decades and this only increases their tasks' complexity to lead. This big change demands school leaders to spend more time in executing their tasks in leading and administrating their school as compared to the previous leaders (74,79). As a result, today's school leaders have to fulfill their responsibilities in three conditions which are full of pressure (increasing as time passes), in need of too rigid reports and insufficient time (80,81).

In the context of education in Malaysia, instructional leadership practices here also have their issues and challenges. Findings from Teachers' Teaching and Movement Monitoring Data Report by Pahang State Education Department in the year 2009 showed some of the causes of the planned instructional program often not parallel to the school goal were the lack of efficacy in school leaders' role in guidance and failure in sharing and articulating school information with the teachers. This problem had given negative effect towards the quality of teachers' T&L process and students' academic achievement (82).

Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (2007) through the Inspectorate of Schools Report for Year 2006 found that the main cause for the problems in teachers' T&L process is when school leaders fail to portray effective instructional leadership. Various occurring problems were caused by weak practice of instructional leadership. Some of them were teachers teaching by following the syllabus too rigidly, being exam oriented without digesting students' demands and also not fulfilling student-centered teaching concept. Furthermore, this report also stated that there were teachers who taught without set induction, practiced teacher-centered teaching, used non-systematic strategic planning, had average level of teaching quality and there were less monitoring from the school administration other than loose assessment system.

The issue regarding instructional leadership is also mentioned in the Annual Report 2014: Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. The report exposed low-performing District Education Offices and the identified factors that contribute to this issue are flaws in practicing instructional leadership among the districts' school leaders and decline in T&L quality in classroom (84). Both factors are perceived as related to each other. It started with the flaws from school leaders, affecting teachers under the leadership. This report also identified five key areas that have significant impact in enhancing students' academic achievement in school. The five areas are students' attendance, students' discipline, teachers' attendance, teaching quality and school leadership. All these areas should exist within a school as it is vital for the improvement of students' academic achievement and school effectiveness.

After researching the issues and challenges regarding instructional leadership locally and internationally with the reports from Minis-

try of Education Malaysia (MoE), Johor State Education Department has highlighted the issue on instructional leadership. In a Johor State Curriculum Committee Meeting Number 3/2011, the Director of Johor State Education Department stressed that in order to overcome the issue of students losing focus during the T&L process in classroom, one of the curriculum tasks that required attention is the practices of instructional leadership (85). Hence, School Management Sector of Johor State Education Department and District Education Offices were given full responsibility to ensure instructional leadership practice can be nourished in all schools in Johor. The meeting also received feedback from a District Education Office, stating that the issues regarding T&L process in the classroom is a vital issue and it cannot be taken lightly. This issue had been discussed in a Professional Assembly in a secondary school on the 31st of March 2011 and 12th of December 2011, where the principals and headmasters were responsible to reevaluate curriculum management in their schools and prioritize monitoring at school level so that teachers' teaching will be more effective and interesting. Principals and headmasters were also reminded on the principles and practices of instructional leadership so that curriculum management in Johor state level is on the right track.

Moreover, in Curriculum Committee Meeting Number 3/2012, Johor State Education Department, the Director of Johor State Education Department reminded on fundamental responsibility of all officers in Johor State Education Department, District Education Offices, principals and headmasters on the needs to master the practices of instructional leadership (86). To ensure that this would be executed, Academic Management Sector of Johor State Education Department and all District Education Offices were assigned to guide principals and headmasters, whether novice or experienced, on instructional leadership. The Director of State Education Department also highlighted that the practice of protecting instructional period should be fully executed in all schools and becomes the fundamental in enhancing instructional leadership process among school leaders in Johor. Recently, Quality Guarantee Sector of Johor State Education Department under Tuan Haji Kamaruddin bin Abu has underlined several steps for consultation and school leaders' management, and some of the initiatives include maintaining and increasing instructional leadership quality among school leaders in Johor.

Melaka State Education Department has also taken the same initiative as Johor State Education Department. Melaka State Education Department Strategic Planning 2015-2019 responded on MoE's plan to empower instructional leadership through the second main strategy which is empowering teachers and school leaders' competency (87). From this second main strategy, Melaka State Education Department will focus on the practices of instructional leadership among school leaders while expecting them to be excellent instructional leaders that act as agent of change and succeed in achieving higher expected goal. School leaders should always be open to new work culture, involving local community in improving school performance and maximize students' success with every ringgit spent (87). In Negeri Sembilan, the importance of instructional leadership is also stated in Negeri Sembilan State Education Department Strategic Planning (2013-2015) through the second strategic core which is high international quality standard. Negeri Sembilan State Education Department put practicing instructional leadership as the fifth strategy to improve school management and leadership. Instructional leadership is also needed to enhance education quality at state level with the purpose of producing human capital that masters 21st century skills and knowledge (88).

Other than these issues and challenges in practicing instructional leadership in other countries or in Malaysia, one scenario of the researches on instructional leadership was found, in which the research findings are focusing more on the context of western countries education culture. A challenge emerged in the field of instructional leadership to develop more researches on this leadership model in the context of Asian countries to explore how school leaders in different education context practice instructional leadership (Hallinger & Bryant, 2014). Hence, this study challenges the researched by researching on instructional leadership practices in Malaysia, a country where there were not much of empirical researches on school leadership (90).

Based on the researches and educational reports above, it is concluded that instructional leadership is one of the most trusted leadership in bringing school towards a better direction by acting as the agent to improve the quality of teachers' T&L and students' academic achievement although this leadership model has passed 30 years of age. Nevertheless, behind the success, there lie several issues and challenges in practicing it. Some of the challenges are incapability of school leaders to be experts in all teaching field, school leaders having limitation to carry all responsibilities because of various challenging work demand and the existence of discomfort or anxiousness among teachers in a hierarchical relationship between school leaders and teachers while practicing instructional leadership.

7. Conclusion

Instructional leadership is a leadership model that needs to be practiced by all school leaders to drive the schools towards excellence. Ministry of Education Malaysia highlighted that school leaders should act as instructional leaders who are actively involved in teachers' development by planning, coordinating and evaluating the process of teaching and learning (T&L) in school. Although various challenges and issues exist in practicing this model of leadership, they need to be handled properly so that quality T&L process can be carried out in classroom, thus giving positive impact towards students' academic achievement.

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