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Volume 4, 2005 - [Issue 3](#)

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Instructional Leadership and the School Principal: A Passing Fancy that Refuses to Fade Away

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Pages 221-239 | Published online: 16 Feb 2007

Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760500244793>

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Abstract

One lasting legacy of the effective schools movement was the institutionalization of the term “instructional leadership” into the vocabulary of educational administration. Evidence from other recent reviews of the literature on principal leadership (e.g., [Hallinger, 2001](#); [Hallinger & Heck 1996](#); [Southworth, 2002](#)) suggest that twenty years later, the instructional leadership construct is still alive in the domains of policy, research, and practice in school leadership and management. Indeed, since the turn of the twenty-first century, the increasing global emphasis on accountability seems to have reignited interest in instructional leadership.

This paper ties together evidence drawn from several extensive reviews of the educational leadership literature that included instructional leadership as a key

construct ([Hallinger, 2001](#), [2003b](#); [Hallinger & Heck, 1996b](#); [Southworth, 2002](#)). The paper will seek to define the core characteristics underlying this approach to school leadership and management based upon both conceptual developments and empirical investigation. The review will identify the defining characteristics of instructional leadership as it has evolved, elaborate on the predominant model in use for studying instructional leadership, and report the empirical evidence about its effects. Finally, the paper will reflect on the relationship between this model and the evolving educational context in which it is exercised and how this is reshaping our perspective on instructional leadership.

The author wishes to thank Ronald Heck and Ken Leithwood whose own work influenced many of the ideas presented in this paper, and who contributed insightful suggestions for improving the manuscript.

Notes

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This query has been raised with me by program developers in Australia, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, and England.

This paper has since been updated in 2005 but has not been presented or published. The figures presented here reflect the updated numbers from the most recent analysis in winter 2005.

The studies reviewed in the [Hallinger, 2001](#) paper consisted entirely of doctoral dissertations that used the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale developed by Hallinger in 1982.

School context, principal leadership, and achievement: The case of secondary schools in Singapore

Source: The Urban Review

The Role of the Elementary School Principal in Program Improvement

Source: Review of Educational Research

Instructional Leadership in Schools: Reflections and empirical evidence

Source: School Leadership and Management

Do Principals Affect Student Outcomes: An Organizational Perspective

Source: School Effectiveness and School Improvement

Research on the School Administrator: The State of the Art, 1967-19801

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