

The Principal's Level of Instructional Leadership Practice: A Survey Study in Secondary Schools Around the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract

The findings of the study indicate that the implementation of instructional leadership by secondary school principals in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur is at a moderate level across all major dimensions analysed. The data obtained reflect that principals have carried out their instructional leadership responsibilities effectively; however, strategic improvements are still required, particularly in the areas of instructional planning and implementation. As instructional leaders, principals play a significant role in providing guidance, support, and supervision to teachers to ensure that the effectiveness of the teaching and learning (T&L) process is enhanced to an optimal level. This study was conducted to examine the level of instructional leadership implementation among principals based on three core dimensions, namely school goal setting, management of instructional programmes, and the development of a conducive learning climate. A survey research design employing a quantitative approach was utilised, involving 241 secondary school teachers in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur as respondents. Data were analysed using SPSS software, while the reliability of the research instrument recorded Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.82 to 0.90, adapted from the reliability findings reported by Sultan (2022) and Feyisa (2023), indicating a high level of validity and reliability. The results further reveal that all dimensions of instructional leadership among principals were at a moderate level, suggesting that principals have performed their leadership responsibilities effectively but continue to require strategic enhancement, particularly in instructional planning and implementation. These findings suggest that continuous professional development programmes should be systematically designed to strengthen principals' capacity as more effective instructional leaders. Overall, the findings of this study are aligned with the aspirations of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013–2025, which emphasises the importance of high-impact leadership as a catalyst for improving teacher performance and student achievement. These findings offer important practical and empirical implications for policymakers, school administrators, and researchers in efforts to strengthen instructional

leadership practices towards enhancing the quality of national education and achieving excellence in 21st-century learning.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, Principal, Secondary School, Teaching and Learning

Introduction

Instructional leadership is a fundamental component that plays a critical role in determining the success of an educational institution. As instructional leaders, principals are responsible for providing continuous support, guidance, and supervision to teachers in order to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning (PdP). A study by Ma and Ahn (2025) found that instructional leadership has a significant relationship with teachers' self-efficacy, particularly in the areas of classroom management and student engagement, thereby contributing to the development of a more positive and conducive school working environment.

The successful implementation of national education policies requires integrated cooperation among all stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, students, and the local community (Lopez & Bauyot, 2025). The Malaysian Education Blueprint (PPPM) 2013–2025 clearly emphasises the importance of effective principal leadership development at all school levels. The primary objective of this policy is to ensure that principals function as competent instructional leaders in planning, supervising, and implementing high-quality instructional programmes, while also supporting continuous professional development among teachers (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2021). In addition, the PPPM outlines various leadership training and development initiatives that focus on pedagogical aspects, guided by the instructional leadership framework proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), which is widely recognised at the international level.

The instructional leadership framework introduced by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) identifies three core dimensions, namely school mission definition, management of instructional programmes, and the development of a positive school climate, as the foundation for effective instructional leadership practice. This model emphasises clarity of school vision and mission, systematic curriculum coordination, supervision and monitoring of teaching practices, as well as efforts to create a conducive learning environment that supports teacher motivation and professional development (Glowach, 2025). Based on this theoretical framework, principals play a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning (PdP) and strengthening overall school quality.

However, an imbalance between administrative responsibilities and instructional roles has been identified as a major issue in the leadership practices of principals in secondary schools within the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. Principals often face time constraints due to extensive administrative workloads, which limit their capacity to prioritise classroom supervision and the systematic development of teachers' professional capabilities (Muhammad Faiz Rosli, 2022). Furthermore, the lack of specific, focused, and continuous training restricts principals' mastery of instructional leadership competencies (Jamilah et al., 2024). Additional challenges, such as the diversity of student backgrounds and increasingly complex social issues, further intensify the demands of instructional leadership, thereby necessitating more strategic, systematic, and comprehensive interventions.

Activities that illustrate these gaps include limited effective collaboration between teachers and administrators, weaknesses in the implementation of joint instructional supervision, and the suboptimal use of educational technology to support PdP (Lim & Tan, 2023). These conditions negatively affect both teacher motivation and student performance. International studies support the view that practices such as teacher coaching, evidence-based professional development, and alignment of school vision are key mechanisms for assessing and strengthening instructional leadership (Hallinger & Liu, 2025; Ma & Marion, 2024).

The significance of this study for the Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM) lies in its potential to provide critical empirical data to support the formulation and enhancement of leadership development policies in urban schools. By identifying implementation issues and existing gaps, leadership training programmes for principals can be tailored to address the specific needs of schools in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and to improve the effectiveness of leadership that is oriented towards excellence in PdP. Schools also function as important professional learning environments through instructional supervision and the cultivation of collaborative learning cultures (Day et al., 2022).

This study is expected to provide a comprehensive overview for administrators, researchers, and policymakers regarding the level of instructional leadership practice, the challenges encountered, and potential strategies to enhance leadership effectiveness in secondary schools. It contributes to the educational leadership literature, particularly within the context of urban schools, and offers practical guidance for strengthening instructional leadership practices. Overall, instructional leadership at the secondary school level in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur plays a vital role in improving educational quality and student achievement. Therefore, systematic actions are required to address existing challenges so that instructional leadership can be implemented holistically and effectively in pursuit of a more progressive and high-quality educational future.

Research Questions and Objectives

This study aims to address the primary research question: “What is the level of instructional leadership practice among principals in secondary schools in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur?” Based on the review of relevant literature, the study evaluates the level of instructional leadership implementation among secondary school principals in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur by focusing on three core dimensions, namely the definition of the school mission, the management of instructional programmes, and the development of a positive school climate. These three dimensions constitute the fundamental components of the framework for effective instructional leadership practice at the school level.

The study was conducted in several secondary schools located in the areas of Bangsar, Pudu, Keramat, and Sentul within the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. The respondents comprised teachers currently serving in the selected schools, with the analysis focusing on their perceptions of principals’ instructional leadership practices. Overall, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the implementation of instructional leadership in secondary schools in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. The research process begins with a review of literature and previous studies, encompassing both local and international sources. Subsequently, the study employs a systematic research methodology, critically

analyses empirical findings, and supports the discussion with recent and relevant references in the field of educational leadership.

Literature Review

Instructional Leadership in the Global Context

Recent global research indicates that instructional leadership continues to be recognised as one of the most influential school leadership approaches in improving the quality of teaching and learning (T&L) as well as student achievement. A large-scale systematic review employing the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) revealed that principals' instructional leadership practices generally fall within the moderate to high range. However, the level of implementation varies significantly depending on national context, school type, and organisational culture (Hallinger, Liu, Aung, & Yan, 2025).

In contrast, a study conducted by Basañes (2020) in the Philippines reported that the instructional leadership capacity of primary school administrators remained at a low level, particularly in the areas of instructional programme development and the monitoring of student learning outcomes. The study attributed these shortcomings to limitations in technical expertise, excessive administrative workloads, and a lack of specialised training in instructional supervision.

Recent quantitative studies further demonstrate that principals who consistently practise instructional leadership at a moderate to high level tend to foster higher levels of teacher self-efficacy, greater openness to innovation in teaching and learning (T&L), and stronger engagement in continuous improvement initiatives. Empirical evidence also suggests that a positive learning climate—characterised by open communication, collaborative professional learning communities (PLCs), and recognition of teachers' efforts—functions as a critical mediating factor in the relationship between instructional leadership and student learning outcomes (Mahmud et al., 2024; Chan, Ahmad, & Lim, 2024; Kovač, 2024; Wang & Li, 2024). Within this context, studies have found that even a moderate yet consistent level of instructional leadership in nurturing a learning-oriented school culture is closely associated with gradual but sustainable increases in teacher participation in professional development activities and the adoption of instructional innovations. Nevertheless, the core dimensions of instructional leadership—namely clear school goal setting, systematic management of instructional programmes, and the development of a conducive learning climate—remain the primary drivers for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and improving student performance. These findings reinforce the need for continuous empowerment of instructional leadership practices through sustained professional development, supportive educational policies, and school organisational structures that prioritise learning (Hallinger et al., 2025; Kovač, 2024; Chan et al., 2024).

Studies on Instructional Leadership in Malaysia

Recent empirical studies in Malaysia indicate that the level of instructional leadership practices among school principals generally ranges from moderate to moderately high, particularly in dimensions related to the monitoring of teaching and learning (T&L) processes and the systematic use of instructional data. For instance, a study by Samsuri (2023) on best practices in instructional leadership found that overall implementation remained at a

moderate level, with many teachers perceiving that principals' roles as curriculum leaders had not been fully or effectively realised.

Similarly, a thesis conducted by Abdullah (2022) at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia reported that the frequency of principals' instructional leadership practices was at a moderate level, and that the relationship between these practices and school effectiveness was also moderate. These findings suggest considerable potential for improvement, particularly in the areas of classroom supervision, instructional monitoring, and the systematic provision of teaching guidance.

In more challenging educational contexts, such as island schools in Sabah, a research report by the Aminuddin Baki Institute (2021) revealed that principals practised instructional leadership at a moderate level, especially in fostering a conducive learning climate, while other dimensions demonstrated slightly higher levels of implementation. Consistent with these findings, a study by Ismail and Rahman (2023) published in the *Malaysian Journal of Educational Research and Technology* reported a moderately high level of instructional leadership practice, with a mean score of approximately 3.9. Although this indicates positive leadership practices, it also reflects a lack of consistently high performance across all instructional leadership dimensions.

Overall, these studies support the conclusion that while instructional leadership is evident in Malaysian schools, key dimensions—including clear goal setting, data-driven instructional programme management, close monitoring of teaching and learning, and sustained professional guidance for teachers—require further strengthening through more targeted leadership training initiatives and clearer policy support.

Studies on Instructional Leadership in Schools

Previous studies on principals' instructional leadership indicate that its implementation in schools generally remains at a moderate level. Samsuri and Ahmad (2023) reported that 67.7% of respondents perceived the principal's role as a curriculum leader to be less prominent, particularly in the areas of teaching supervision, professional guidance, and the use of teaching and learning (T&L) data. Other studies similarly emphasise that instructional leadership practices remain modest, especially with regard to the provision of pedagogical feedback and the coordination of teaching and learning through effective instructional design (Ismail & Rahman, 2022).

A study involving 17 school leaders conducted by Naguit (2024) found that although the majority of respondents (70%) demonstrated a high level of instructional leadership, a proportion of leaders were still categorised as moderate (20%) and low (10%). The main weaknesses identified were related to mentoring, coaching, and the use of data in instructional decision-making. Schools led by principals with lower levels of instructional leadership were found to place minimal emphasis on classroom observation, feedback provision, and the utilisation of student assessment data to improve teaching and learning. This situation was further associated with lower levels of student achievement (Naguit, 2024).

In a different educational context, a mixed-methods study examining instructional leadership among primary school principals during curriculum reform implementation revealed that

although principals rated themselves as actively practising instructional leadership, qualitative findings indicated that actual classroom practices were inconsistent and generally remained at a moderate level. These inconsistencies were particularly evident in teaching supervision and direct instructional guidance (Lee, Hallinger, & Walker, 2025).

Dimensions of Instructional Leadership

The instructional leadership model developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) comprises three core dimensions: the definition of the school mission, the management of instructional programmes, and the development of a positive school climate. This model emphasises key elements such as establishing a clear school vision and mission, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring and supervising teaching practices, and fostering a conducive learning environment to support professional development and enhance teacher motivation (Shaked & Schechter, 2025).

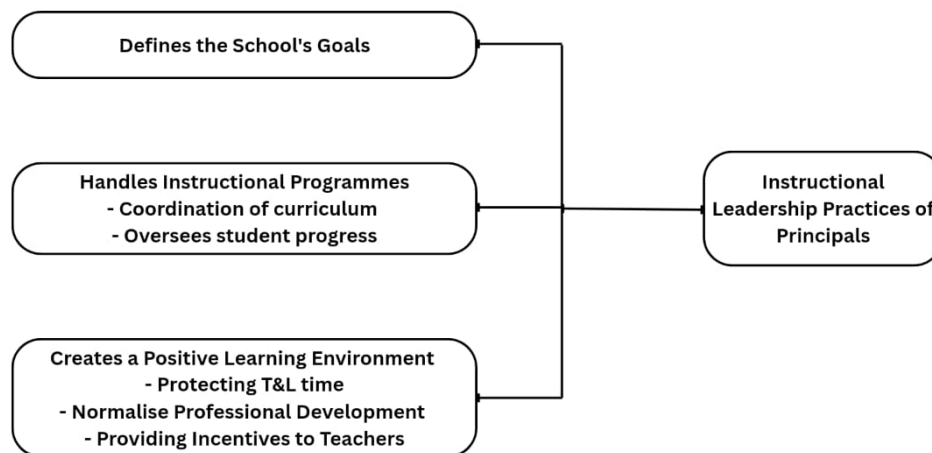
Instructional leadership plays a critical role in enhancing institutional performance through these three interrelated dimensions. The first dimension, defining the school mission, focuses on the development of a clear, shared, and dynamic learning vision that guides all members of the school community. According to Hallinger and Heck (2019), effective leadership begins with a vision that is clearly understood and collectively embraced, serving as a driving force in shaping a learning culture oriented towards academic achievement.

The second dimension, managing the instructional programme, encompasses the planning, implementation, and evaluation of teaching and learning (T&L). As instructional leaders, principals are primarily responsible for providing adequate instructional resources and systematically organising teachers' professional development to ensure instructional effectiveness. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2021) assert that effective instructional programme management enhances teaching quality through continuous monitoring of student learning outcomes and the provision of targeted pedagogical guidance.

The third dimension involves the development of a positive school climate. A supportive school climate, grounded in open communication and collaboration among teachers, students, and parents, is essential for the success of educational initiatives. Leithwood, Sun, and Pollock (2023) explain that leaders who cultivate a learning-oriented school climate while sustaining teacher and student motivation are better positioned to drive overall school improvement and long-term success.

These three dimensions are closely interconnected and must be implemented as a comprehensive and integrated strategy by school leaders to sustain educational excellence. Instructional leadership that emphasises a clear vision, effective instructional programme management, and a positive school climate is therefore crucial for secondary schools in addressing the increasingly complex educational challenges of the 21st century.

Conceptual Framework



Source: Hallinger dan Murphy (1985)

The conceptual framework presented in this study illustrates a linear model that explains the relationship between principals' instructional leadership practices as the main construct, comprising three core dimensions based on the instructional leadership theory developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). This framework is specifically designed to measure the level of instructional leadership practices among principals in secondary schools in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur.

On the right side of the framework, Instructional Leadership is positioned as a key construct in educational leadership. It consists of three interrelated dimensions that collectively influence the effectiveness of principals' leadership practices. These dimensions include defining school goals, managing instructional programmes—which encompass curriculum coordination and student progress monitoring—and developing a positive learning climate, with particular emphasis on the protection of teaching and learning (T&L/PdP) time and the promotion of continuous professional development. These dimensions complement one another in ensuring effective leadership practices that are consistently focused on improving educational quality. The selection of the Hallinger and Murphy (1985) model as the theoretical foundation of this study is intentional, as the model has been empirically validated and widely applied across diverse educational and organisational contexts.

On the left side of the framework are the three dimensions that constitute instructional leadership. The first dimension, defining school goals, serves as the foundation of effective instructional leadership. School leaders play a critical role in formulating and clearly communicating shared educational goals to all members of the school community in order to establish a common vision and mission. This process provides clear direction and focus for collective action while strengthening commitment to the implementation of school programmes. Research by Ralebese (2025) indicates that strong leadership in defining school goals is essential in fostering commitment and motivation among both teachers and students. With clearly articulated goals, schools are better positioned to implement teaching and learning practices that are oriented towards student achievement and holistic development.

Furthermore, continuous communication and stakeholder involvement in goal-setting processes enhance social cohesion and collective responsibility in achieving the school's vision (Robinson, 2011; Ralebese, 2025).

The second dimension involves the management of instructional programmes, with a focus on curriculum coordination and student progress monitoring. A key responsibility of instructional leaders is to ensure that curriculum implementation aligns with educational standards and school objectives. Continuous monitoring of teaching practices and student performance serves as a crucial mechanism for identifying gaps and enabling timely instructional interventions. Hallinger and Wang (2015) assert that instructional leaders must be actively involved in organising, supervising, and evaluating instructional activities to ensure curriculum effectiveness. Effective leadership in this dimension extends beyond administrative curriculum management to include sustained communication between principals and teachers in reviewing learning outcomes. Through such collaboration, instructional weaknesses can be identified and addressed holistically through appropriate support systems and resource allocation (Grissom et al., 2013; Ralebese, 2025).

The third dimension focuses on the development of a positive school climate that supports effective teaching and learning. Protecting instructional time from unnecessary interruptions allows teachers to concentrate fully on classroom instruction without being burdened by excessive administrative demands. The role of instructional leaders in safeguarding teaching and learning time is therefore a critical determinant of instructional quality. In addition, promoting continuous professional development enhances teachers' competencies and readiness to respond to evolving pedagogical challenges. Such practices not only encourage innovation and instructional improvement but also cultivate a professional culture that values and recognises teachers' efforts. Hsieh (2025) emphasises that a positive learning climate and strong professional development support are closely linked to increased teacher motivation and commitment. Supporting this view, Sultan (2022) found that schools which prioritise professional development and protect instructional time tend to demonstrate higher student academic achievement and improved teacher well-being (Sebastian et al., 2018; Sultan, 2022; Ralebese, 2025). This dimension also includes teacher recognition and reward, which functions as a motivational strategy to acknowledge teachers' contributions, achievements, and instructional innovations.

The arrows in the framework represent the linear and positive relationship between instructional leadership and its three dimensions. The model suggests that principals' instructional leadership practices can be measured and evaluated through the collective implementation of these dimensions. An increase in the level of practice across these dimensions is expected to result in a higher overall level of instructional leadership effectiveness.

Overall, instructional leadership as the main construct requires the integration of all three dimensions to support school excellence. Defining school goals provides strategic direction, managing instructional programmes ensures effective curriculum implementation and outcome monitoring, and fostering a positive learning climate creates an environment conducive to continuous professional growth. This holistic approach reflects the core principles of effective instructional leadership and is consistent with international research

demonstrating that strong instructional leadership practices are closely associated with improved student learning outcomes and the development of a positive school culture. Based on this conceptual framework, the findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of instructional leadership practices in secondary schools within the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, a context that remains underrepresented in existing research.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a survey research design using a quantitative approach to assess the extent to which instructional leadership is practised by principals in secondary schools within the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. This design was selected as it is appropriate for collecting data from a relatively large number of respondents and enables systematic statistical analysis to address the research questions effectively (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The quantitative approach allows instructional leadership practices to be evaluated objectively, consistently, and systematically.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of secondary school teachers. The population of this study comprised secondary school teachers in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, covering four administrative zones: Bangsar, Pudu, Keramat, and Sentul. A total of 480 teachers under the supervision of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur Education Department constituted the study population.

A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that teachers from schools across the four zones were represented fairly, thereby enhancing the accuracy and generalisability of the findings. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, a minimum sample size of 214 respondents was recommended for a population of 480. In this study, 241 teachers were successfully recruited, exceeding the minimum required sample size. All questionnaires were returned with complete responses, resulting in a response rate of 50.21%, which is considered satisfactory for survey-based educational research.

Research Context

This study was conducted in selected secondary schools under the supervision of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur Education Department. The schools were chosen to reflect the diversity of principals' leadership backgrounds and teachers' professional experiences within an urban educational context. Instructional leadership is regarded as a strategic role of school principals in ensuring the achievement of school educational goals. Therefore, this survey is particularly important in examining how principals exercise instructional leadership practices within a complex and dynamic urban environment.

The findings of the study provide a comprehensive overview of the actual implementation of instructional leadership practices, including school goal setting, curriculum coordination, student progress monitoring, and the development of a conducive and positive learning climate.

Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used as the main research instrument and consisted of two sections. Part A collected respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, years of teaching experience, and length of service under the current principal. Part B employed the Instructional Leadership Practice Scale, which was developed based on the instructional leadership model proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) and adapted from the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS).

The instrument measured three core dimensions of instructional leadership;

1. Defining school goals
2. Managing instructional programmes, including curriculum coordination and student progress monitoring
3. Developing a positive school climate, encompassing the protection of teaching and learning (T&L/PdP) time, teachers' professional development, and teacher recognition and rewards

In addition, selected elements from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) were adapted to suit the Malaysian educational context. The final instrument consisted of 29 items, measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instructional leadership instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for each of the three dimensions. Overall, the scale recorded reliability values ranging from $\alpha = 0.82$ to $\alpha = 0.90$, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability. Specifically, the reliability coefficients for each dimension were as follows: defining school goals ($\alpha = 0.87$), managing instructional programmes ($\alpha = 0.85$), and developing a positive school climate ($\alpha = 0.89$). These values demonstrate strong reliability and stability for all dimensions (Sultan, 2022; Feyisa, 2023) and meet the recommended reliability standards for educational and administrative research as outlined by Hair et al. (2019).

All collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30. Data analysis commenced with data screening procedures, including data cleaning and inspection to identify missing values and potential outliers. Descriptive statistical analyses were then conducted to describe respondents' demographic profiles and determine the level of principals' instructional leadership practices. These analyses involved the use of means, standard deviations, and score classifications.

The interpretation of mean score levels was based on the classification proposed by Wiersma (2000), as follows: 1.00–2.70 (low), 2.71–3.40 (moderate), and 3.41–5.00 (high).

Table 1

Mean Score Level Interpretation Scale

Mean Score July	Level	Interpretation
1.00 - 2.70	Low	Inefficient instructional leadership practices
2.71 - 3.40	Moderate	Acceptable instructional leadership practices
3.41 - 5.00	High	Effective and impactful instructional leadership practices

Source : Wiersma (2000)

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 2

Profil Demografi Responden (n = 214)

Demographic Types	Category	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	115	47.7
	Female	126	52.3
Age (year)	29 – 39 years	80	33.2
	40 – 49 years	84	34.9
	50 above	36	14.9
	Less than 29 years	41	17.0
Years of Service	1 – 3 years	97	40.2
	4 -5 years	77	32.0
	6 years and above	27	11.2
Years of Service under the Current Principal	1 – 3 years	97	40.2
	4 - 5 tahun	77	32.0
	6 tahun ke atas	27	11.2
	Kurang daripada 1 tahun	40	16.6

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents were female teachers, comprising 126 individuals (52.3%), while 115 respondents (47.7%) were male. In terms of age distribution, the largest proportion of respondents fell within the 40–49 years age group, with 84 teachers (34.9%), followed closely by the 29–39 years age group, consisting of 80 teachers (33.2%). This distribution suggests that most respondents were from the middle-aged cohort, a group typically associated with substantial professional experience and stability in teaching practice.

With regard to years of service, 97 respondents (40.2%) reported having 1–3 years of teaching experience, while 77 respondents (32.0%) had 4–5 years of experience. Teachers with six years or more of service accounted for 27 respondents (11.2%), whereas 16.6% of respondents reported less than one year of teaching experience.

Similarly, in terms of length of service under the current principal, 40.2% of respondents had served between 1–3 years, followed by 32.0% who had served between 4–5 years, and only 11.2% who had worked under the same principal for more than six years. This distribution indicates a reasonable level of continuity in teacher–principal working relationships, allowing respondents sufficient exposure to evaluate their principals' instructional leadership practices.

The Level of Instructional Leadership Practices

Descriptive analysis found that the level of implementation of instructional leadership by principals in secondary schools around the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur recorded a moderate level, with an overall average score of 3.166 and a standard deviation of 0.530. This finding reflects that, according to the teachers' perception, the instructional leadership practices carried out by the principal can still be improved, especially in efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of leadership at the school level.

Table 3

Level of Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices by Dimension

Instructional Leadership Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Defining School Goals	3.156	0.757	Moderate
Managing Instructional Programmes (Curriculum Coordination)	3.153	0.704	Moderate
Managing Instructional Programmes (Monitoring Student Progress)	3.182	0.753	Moderate
Creating a Positive Learning Climate (Protecting Teaching and Learning Time)	3.139	0.798	Moderate
Creating a Positive Learning Climate (Promoting Professional Development)	3.175	0.640	Moderate
Creating a Positive Learning Climate (Providing Rewards to Teachers)	3.182	0.850	Moderate
Overall	3.166	0.530	Moderate

Referring to Table 3, the overall level of principals' instructional leadership practices across all dimensions was found to be at a moderate level, with an overall mean score of 3.166 and a standard deviation of 0.530. The survey results further indicate that all instructional leadership dimensions assessed also recorded moderate mean scores, suggesting a consistent pattern of implementation across the different leadership functions.

The Defining School Goals dimension recorded a mean score of 3.156 with a standard deviation of 0.757, indicating that efforts related to establishing clear and focused school goals are present but remain open to further strengthening in order to enhance the overall effectiveness of instructional leadership. While principals appear to communicate school goals to a certain extent, greater emphasis on clarity, shared understanding, and strategic alignment may improve instructional coherence at the school level.

For the Instructional Programme Management dimension, the subdimensions of Curriculum Coordination and Student Progress Monitoring recorded mean scores of 3.153 and 3.182, respectively. These findings suggest that both functions are implemented at a satisfactory level; however, they have not yet reached a high or optimal level of excellence. This indicates that although principals are involved in managing instructional programmes, more systematic and data-driven practices may be required to strengthen curriculum alignment and monitoring processes.

The Developing a Positive Learning Climate dimension, which encompasses Protecting Teaching and Learning (PdP) Time, Cultivating Professional Development, and Providing Rewards to Teachers, recorded mean scores ranging from 3.139 to 3.182, with varying

standard deviations. These results again reflect a moderate level of instructional leadership practice. The findings suggest that principals have fulfilled their fundamental role in fostering a conducive learning environment and supporting teachers' professional growth; however, continuous improvement is necessary to enhance the effectiveness and consistency of practices within this dimension.

Overall, the mean score of 3.166 (SD = 0.530) confirms that the level of instructional leadership practice among principals in secondary schools in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur remains moderate. This finding is consistent with recent literature over the past five years, which highlights the critical role of principals in strengthening instructional leadership to optimise school effectiveness and improve student achievement (Hallinger, 2021; Robinson, 2023). Although the recorded level of practice is moderate, the results indicate substantial scope for improvement, particularly in curriculum coordination and the enhancement of teachers' professional development. Accordingly, instructional leadership development should be prioritised within school management strategies to support instructional excellence and the continuous improvement of student outcomes.

Discussion

Moderate Level of Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices

The findings of this study indicate that the level of instructional leadership practices among secondary school principals in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur is at a moderate level. This result is consistent with recent studies which assert that instructional leadership encompasses multiple interrelated dimensions, including defining school goals, managing instructional programmes, and developing a positive learning climate, all of which contribute to the effectiveness of teaching and learning (T&L/PdP) and student academic achievement (Robinson, 2021; Shi & Ma, 2025).

The moderate level observed suggests that principals are making consistent efforts to fulfil their instructional leadership responsibilities. However, these practices have not yet reached an optimal or high level. This finding aligns with Robinson (2021), who argues that while many school leaders demonstrate commitment to instructional leadership, their effectiveness is often constrained by factors such as administrative workload, limited time, insufficient resources, and restricted access to continuous professional training. Similar challenges were also highlighted by Shi and Ma (2025), who noted that competing managerial demands frequently limit principals' capacity to engage deeply in instructional supervision and pedagogical leadership.

From a theoretical perspective, instructional leadership is expected not only to improve student achievement but also to enhance teachers' professional growth through systematic support, instructional monitoring, meaningful feedback, and curriculum coordination (Pempinpin & Mohamed, 2020; Kusumaningrum, 2025). The moderate level of practice identified in this study may indicate that principals have yet to fully adopt innovative and transformational instructional leadership strategies capable of addressing contemporary educational challenges, such as the integration of educational technology and the diverse learning needs of students in urban school settings.

Overall, the findings suggest that while instructional leadership is present and functioning within secondary schools in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, its implementation remains largely procedural and routine, rather than strategic and transformative. This reinforces the need for targeted efforts to elevate instructional leadership practices to a more impactful level.

Implication of the Study

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings support the applicability of the Hallinger and Murphy (1985) three-dimensional instructional leadership model in explaining leadership practices in Malaysian secondary schools. The moderate levels recorded across all dimensions confirm the relevance of this framework; however, they also indicate that actual practices have not yet achieved the optimal standards described in contemporary instructional leadership literature (Meyer, Li, & Hallinger, 2025). This suggests the need for further refinement of the model's application within complex urban educational contexts.

Practically, the findings reveal that while principals are involved in instructional leadership activities, their practices remain largely routine—particularly in curriculum coordination, student progress monitoring, and teachers' professional development. This observation aligns with Meyer et al. (2025), who found that principals' instructional leadership practices during curriculum reform were often insufficiently transformational to drive meaningful pedagogical change. Therefore, principals need to strengthen their instructional focus by moving beyond compliance-based practices towards more strategic and data-informed leadership approaches.

From an educational policy perspective, the results highlight the need to enhance and refocus leadership training and development programmes for principals. Existing programmes may not sufficiently emphasise critical instructional leadership skills such as instructional supervision, data-driven decision-making, and professional learning facilitation (Ong et al., 2021; Teo, Devadason, & Baharudin, 2020; Siti Nuramal Jariah Kameri et al., 2022; Hussin et al., 2025). Policymakers should therefore ensure that leadership development initiatives are aligned more closely with the core dimensions of instructional leadership to improve school-level teaching and learning outcomes.

At the school management level, principals are encouraged to reorganise leadership priorities by allocating more time, resources, and attention to their role as instructional leaders. This includes strengthening professional learning communities, utilising student achievement data for instructional decision-making, and implementing recognition and reward systems that promote high-quality teaching practices. Such strategic adjustments are essential to enhance the overall level of instructional leadership and contribute to sustained improvements in school effectiveness and student performance.

Limitations

The data collected through teacher questionnaires provide valuable insights into teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional leadership practices. However, these perceptions may not fully reflect principals' actual leadership behaviours in the context of daily school operations. Furthermore, the study sample was limited to 241 secondary school teachers within the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. As such, the findings may not be fully

generalisable to all schools in Malaysia, particularly rural schools and schools in other states that operate within different educational contexts and face distinct challenges.

In addition, the study employed a descriptive research design and relied solely on self-reported data, without the inclusion of qualitative methods such as classroom observations, interviews, or the analysis of objective student achievement data. This limitation restricts the ability of the study to establish causal relationships between instructional leadership practices and teaching and learning outcomes. Moreover, contextual factors such as school culture, organisational values, and professional learning community norms—which have been shown to influence teacher experiences and student achievement (Berkovich, 2025)—were not explored in depth.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research is recommended to adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of instructional leadership implementation and its impact on the quality of teaching and learning (T&L/PdP) as well as student achievement. In addition, studies conducted across different regions, school types, and educational levels would allow for meaningful comparisons of instructional leadership effectiveness across diverse educational contexts.

Furthermore, the exploration of assistive technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), in supporting instructional leadership practices represents an emerging and increasingly significant area of research. As highlighted by Berkovich and Suswandari (2025), the integration of digital and AI-based tools has the potential to enhance instructional supervision, data-informed decision-making, and professional development processes. Therefore, further research on the role of assistive technology in instructional leadership is essential to ensure that school leadership practices remain relevant and responsive to the evolving challenges of 21st-century education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study indicate that the level of instructional leadership practices among secondary school principals in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur remains at a moderate level. This suggests that principals' ongoing commitment to fulfilling their instructional leadership roles has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning (T&L/PdP) and contribute positively to student academic achievement. Nevertheless, the results also reveal substantial scope for improvement in strengthening the implementation of instructional leadership practices in schools.

Accordingly, sustained support through strategic, systematic, and context-sensitive leadership development initiatives, alongside the implementation of more comprehensive and advanced research, is necessary to optimise instructional leadership practices. Such efforts are expected to assist schools in addressing both current and future educational challenges more effectively. Overall, the findings of this study are consistent with recent literature that emphasises instructional leadership as a key driver of positive change in schools and a crucial mechanism for fostering productive, collaborative, and high-quality teaching and learning practices.

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