



***School Leadership that Makes a Difference:
Lessons from 30 Years of International Research***

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Leadership for 21st Century Schools: From Instructional Leadership to Leadership for Learning ¹

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Professor Hallinger graduated with his Doctorate in Administration and Policy Analysis from Stanford University in 1983. Prior to coming to HKIED in August 2008, Professor Philip Hallinger was Chief Academic Officer and Professor of Management at the College of Management, Mahidol University in Thailand for 8 years. He also held the position of Professor of Leadership and Organizations and Director of the *Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Leadership* at Peabody College/Vanderbilt University for 15 years.

Professor Hallinger has published over 175 journal articles and book chapters as well as 10 books. His publications cover a wide range of management areas including leadership, managing change, leadership development, educational quality, school effectiveness and school improvement, and educational reform. Co-author of *Implementing Problem-based Leadership Development*, Professor Hallinger has been one of the leading international scholars responsible for

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In addition to his scholarly work, Professor Hallinger has been instrumental in supporting the development of school leadership centers throughout East Asia. He has personally conducted multi-day training institutes for over 4,000 school leaders in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan and China.

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Abstract

A legacy of the effective schools movement has been the institutionalization of the term "instructional leadership" into the vocabulary of educational leadership and management. Instructional leadership came to prominence as a paradigm for school leadership and management in the 1980s in the USA before being eclipsed by transformational leadership in the 1990s. Instructional leadership has recently reincarnated as a global phenomenon in the form of "leadership for learning". In this lecture, I will identify the defining characteristics of instructional leadership, elaborate on the predominant model in use, report on empirical evidence about its effects on teaching and learning, and reflect on the transformation of instructional leadership in its reincarnated form of "leadership for learning".

During the 1980s an emerging body of research on effective schools (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Hawley & Rosenholtz, 1984; Purkey & Smith, 1983) focused the attention of policymakers and scholars on the principal leadership. This research asserted that the "instructional leadership" role of the principal was crucial to school effectiveness (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Bossert et al., 1983; Dwyer, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood & Montgomery 1982). Earlier efforts to study the impact of principal leadership had begun to identify professional leadership dimensions of the principal's role that impacted school success (e.g., Erickson, 1967; Gross & Herriott, 1965). Nonetheless, it was a key legacy of the effective schools movement to focus global attention on instructional leadership.

At the same time, even in the heyday of effective schools, advocacy for principals to exercise “strong instructional leadership was not without critics and skeptics (e.g., Barth, 1986; Cuban, 1988). They questioned whether it was possible for principals could focus so strongly on the instructional leadership role and, therefore, its viability as a dominant paradigm for school leadership. This trend gathered steam during the 1990s as scholars interested in school improvement argued the case for transformational leadership (e.g., Leithwood, 1994) and teacher leadership (Barth, 1990, 2001). Indeed, by the late 1990s, it seemed as if instructional leadership had lost its potency as an organizing concept for school leadership.

Yet, the rise of the accountability movement at the turn of the 21st century gave rise to an increasing focus on learning outcomes of students and schools. Moreover, whereas “instructional leadership” had previously been primarily a North American phenomenon, global interest in educational reform and school-level accountability created a new global interest in instructional leadership (e.g., Gewertz, 2003; Hunter Foundation, 2005; Stricherz, 2001a, 2001b; Virginia Department of Education, 2004). Ten years later instructional leadership has morphed into a new term leadership for learning and become a new paradigm for 21st century school leadership.

This purpose of this lecture is to unpack current thinking about instructional leadership and assess its relationship to leadership for learning. More specifically, I will seek to identify the value has been added to conceptions of instructional leadership that have carried over from the 1980s and 1990s to today. My lecture will draw extensively on findings gleaned from specific empirical studies as well as from a series of reviews of research on principal leadership conducted from during the 1960s (Erickson, 1967), 1970s (March, 1978), 1980s (Bossert et al., 1982; Bridges, 1982; Firestone & Wilson, 1985; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Pitner, 1988), 1990s (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b, 1998; Heck & Hallinger, 1999; Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1990) to the present (Bell, Bolam & Cubillo, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstomm, 2004; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; Southworth, 2002, 2003; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003).

The Instructional Leadership Role of the Principal

A retrospective assessment of instructional leadership yields some general observations about how scholars have conceived of this role over the past 25 years. First, with its emergence out of the research on “instructionally

effective elementary schools” (e.g., Edmonds, 1979; Hawley & Rosenholtz, 1984; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rutter, Maugham, Mortimore, Ouston & Smith, 1983), instructional leadership was conceived as a *role carried out explicitly by the school principal* (Bossert et al., 1982; Dwyer 1986; Glasman, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Leithwood et al., 1990; van de Grift, 1990). During the 1980’s relatively little reference was made to teachers, department heads, or even to assistant principals as instructional leaders and there was little or no discussion of instructional leadership as a distributed or shared function.

Growth of Instructional Leadership in the USA

The potency of interest in instructional leadership during the 1980s was demonstrated in the actions of the Federal government in the USA. Following publication of the effective schools findings during the early 1980s, the American government initiated the establishment of a School Leadership Academy in every state. This was an unprecedented step for a Federal government that historically left it for state governments to take the lead on education issues. The Federal effort to support the development of school leadership assumed its legitimacy from a growing belief that, for the first time, there was a credible knowledge base underlying the *development* of principal leadership (Barth, 1986; Cuban, 1984, 1988; Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992). This knowledge base drew largely from emerging research on principal instructional leadership in effective schools which provided a conceptual framework for the Academies’ leadership development curricula (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Bossert et al., 1982; Dwyer, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). These academies explicitly fostered an image of *strong, directive instructional leadership* as the normative thrust for school leaders (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Bossert et al., 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Grier, 1987; Hallinger & Greenblatt, 1991; Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992; Marsh, 1992).

Although selected critics highlighted the limitations of the underlying research (Barth, 1986; Bossert et al., 1982; Cuban, 1984, 1988), their critiques had but limited effect. Policymakers had found a hammer -- instructional leadership -- and everything related to the principalship began to look like a nail. In the haste to implement stronger instructional leadership on a large scale, a “one size fits all” model of instructional leadership was disseminated to both aspiring and practicing school principals (Barth, 1986). This model of instructional leadership was disseminated as *the normatively desirable role* for principals who wished to be “effective” and represented a major change from the role practiced more generally by principals in the USA and elsewhere.

It is, however, a fact that schools differ widely in terms of their needs and resources, and therefore in the type of leadership required to move them forward. This well-established premise of general leadership theory was overlooked by policymakers intent on strengthening leadership in schools. Moreover, the drive to turn principals into instructional leaders ran counter to findings from empirical studies and theoretical analyses that sought to account for why most principals did *not* assume an active role as instructional leaders (e.g., Barth, 1986, 1990; Cuban, 1984, 1988; March, 1978; Weick, 1976). These critiques offered a variety of reasons for why it could be unrealistic to expect principals to fulfill this normative model of school leadership:

- At a practical level, principals were required to fulfill a variety of roles (e.g., political, managerial, instructional); to focus too much on only one of them would have dysfunctional consequences (Cuban, 1988; March, 1977);
- Expectations that principals would act as instructional leaders assumed a level of expertise, personal values and ambition that ran counter to the population characteristics and career trends of American principals (March, 1978);
- The daily routine of managing schools pushes principals towards a set a work activities characterized by brevity, interruption, and fragmentation that is at odds with many of the key activities proposed for instructional leaders (Barth, 1980; Bridges, 1977; Deal & Celotti, 1980; March, 1978; Marshall, 1996; Peterson, 1977-78; Weick, 1976);
- The “one size fits all” framework of instructional leadership disseminated through the leadership academies was at odds with multiple constraints that act on the exercise of leadership across schools that differ in resources, size, staffing, and student needs (Barth, 1986; Bridges, 1977; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992).

An Emergent Conception of Instructional Leadership: 1980 to 1990

With these caveats in mind, let us take a closer look at just what this “early model” of instructional leadership consisted looked like. Note that much of the early research on instructional leadership was drawn from studies of urban elementary schools serving poor children (e.g., Brookover & Lezotte, 1977). These studies included descriptions of principals who had managed to turn their schools around. The principals tended to be highly directive in their leadership styles, driving the school towards achievement of a results-oriented

academic mission. Descriptions of these instructional leaders suggested that they had somehow managed to overcome the pressures that push principals away from a focus on teaching and learning (Marshall, 1996).

Instructional leaders were viewed as *culture builders*. They sought to create an “academic press” that fostered high expectations and standards for students, as well as for teachers (Barth, 1990, 2002; Bossert et al., 1982; Mortimore, 1993; Glasman, 1984; Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, 1986; Heck et al., 1990; Purkey & Smith, 1983). They modeled their high expectations and were loathe to compromise high standards of learning for all students.

Instructional leaders were *goal-oriented*. They took the lead in defining a clear direction for their schools and personally coordinating efforts towards increasing student achievement. In instructionally effective schools serving under-achieving pupils, this direction focused primarily on the improvement of *student academic outcomes* (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Glasman, 1984; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood et al., 1990; Leitner, 1994; Mortimore, 1993; O’Day, 1983). Terms such as vision, mission, and goals became situated centrally in the vocabulary of school leaders who wished to succeed in an environment of educational reform (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Hallinger & Heck, 2002).

Crucially, instructional leaders using strategies of coordination and control to align the school’s academic mission with strategy and action. Thus, instructional leaders focused not only on *leading*, but also on *managing*. Their managerial roles included coordinating, controlling, and supervising curriculum and instruction (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Bossert et al., 1982; Cohen & Miller, 1980; Dwyer, 1986; Glasman, 1984; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Hallinger et al., 1996; Heck, 1992, 1993; Heck et al., 1990; Jones, 1983; Leitner, 1994). Instructional leadership involved considerable engagement with the “technical core” of education: teaching and learning (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bossert et al., 1982; Dwyer, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Firestone & Wilson, 1985). Instructional leaders led from a combination of expertise and charisma (Bossert et al., 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1983). They were hands-on leaders, working *hip-deep in curriculum and instruction* (Cuban 1984) and unafraid of *working directly with teachers* on the improvement of teaching and learning (Bossert et al., 1982; Cuban, 1984; Dwyer, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, 1986; Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood et al., 1990).

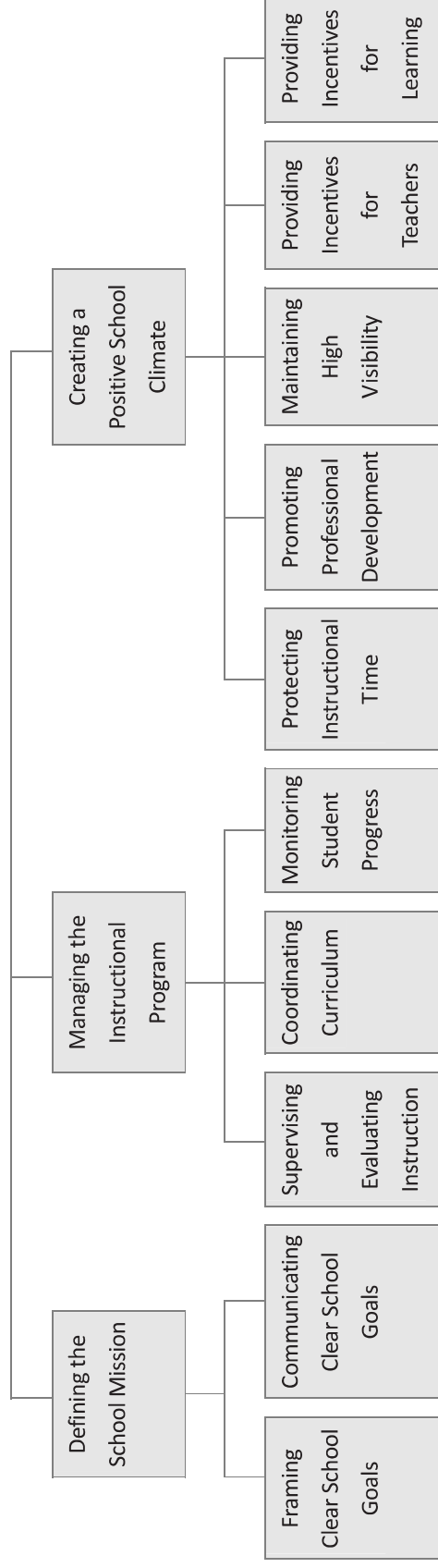
As suggested earlier, in American schools of the 1980s, this behavioral

orientation was far from the norm for educational administrators (Bridges, 1977; Peterson, 1977-78; March, 1978; Wolcott, 1973). Descriptions of these principals tended towards a heroic view of their capabilities that often spawned feelings ranging from inadequacy to guilt and shame among the majority of principals who wondered why they had such difficulty fitting into this role expectation (Barth, 1986, 1990; Donaldson 2001; Hallinger & Greenblatt, 1991; Marshall, 1996). Thus, despite the considerable efforts of the government to foster acceptance of this role among principals, it was clearly going against the long established norms of the principalship.

A Conceptual Definition of Instructional Leadership

Several notable models of instructional leadership were proposed during the 1980s (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1990; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982, Van de Grift, 1987; Villanova, Gauthier, Proctor, & Shoemaker, 1982). I will focus here on the model proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) since it is the model that has been used most frequently in empirical investigations (Hallinger, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a). This model, similar in key respects to others referenced above, proposes three dimensions for the instructional leadership role of the principal: *Defining the School's Mission*, *Managing the Instructional Program*, and *Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate* (Hallinger, 2008; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). These three dimensions are further delineated into 10 instructional leadership functions (see Figure One).

Figure One: Instructional Management Framework



From Hallinger & Murphy, 1985

Defining the School's Mission

Two functions, *Framing the School's Goals* and *Communicating the School's Goals*, comprise the first dimension, *Defining the School's Mission*. This dimension concerns the principal's role in determining the central purposes of the school. The dimension focuses on the principal's role in working with staff to ensure that the school has clear, measurable, time-based goals focused on the academic progress of students. It is also the principal's responsibility to communicate these goals so they are widely known and supported throughout the school community.

Within this model, the *process* of goal development was considered less critical than the outcome. Goals could be set by the principal or in collaboration with staff. The bottom-line, however, was the school should have clear, academic goals that staff support and incorporate into their daily practice. This picture of goal-oriented, academically-focused schools contrasted with the typical situation in which schools were portrayed as pursuing a variety of vague, ill-defined, and sometimes conflicting academic and non-academic goals.

The instructional leader's role in defining a school mission was captured in a study of effective California elementary schools conducted by Hallinger and Murphy (1986). In the course of their study, they observed teachers in their classrooms for several days. One teacher had an affective education activity center entitled "I am. . ." in the back of the room. However, they never saw students working at it. When queried about this, the teacher observed:

Yes, the affective activity center is something I really like to use with my students. However, this particular class has not made the usual progress in basic subjects, so I've had less time for affective activities. Our focus in the school is on ensuring that every one of our students has mastered basic subjects. We really try to make time for optional subjects as well. However, *our principal expects us to spend as much time on reading, writing, spelling, and math as is necessary to achieve this objective* (emphasis added). So I adjust the time accordingly. (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986)

Later during one of his interviews, the principal repeated this expectation almost word for word. It was obviously something that had been discussed with and among the staff many times. This comment captures several characteristics of the instructional leader's role in defining a clear mission. First, at this school the mission was absolutely clear. It was written down and

visible around the school. Second, it was focused on academic development *appropriate to the needs of this particular school population*. Third, the mission set a priority for the work of teachers. Fourth, it was known and accepted as legitimate by teachers throughout the school. Fifth, the mission was articulated, actively supported, and modeled by the principal.

Managing the Instructional Program

The second dimension *Managing the Instructional Program* focuses on the coordination and control of instruction and curriculum. This dimension incorporates three leadership (or what might be termed management) functions: *Supervising and Evaluating Instruction, Coordinating the Curriculum, Monitoring Student Progress*. Within this model of instructional leadership, managing the instructional program requires the principal to be deeply engaged in stimulating, supervising and monitoring teaching and learning in the school. Obviously, these functions demand that the principal have expertise in teaching and learning, as well as a commitment to the school's improvement. It is this dimension that requires the principal to become "hip-deep" in the school's instructional program (Bossert et al., 1982; Cuban, 1984; Dwyer, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Marshall, 1996).

By way of example, I would recall the principal in the example cited above. In discussions of how the school monitored student academic progress, several different teachers at this school observed that the principal "knew the reading level and progress of all 650+ students in this primary school" (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). This particular behavior is not a requirement for instructional leadership. However, it reflects the degree of this principal's involvement in monitoring student progress and in managing the school's instructional program.

It was this dimension of the role that caused the greatest consternation among critics of the instructional leadership model. Even "friendly critics" questioned whether the broader population of principals possessed the necessary instructional expertise or the time to engage this role (e.g., Cuban, 1984, 1988). This was especially the case in with respect to larger schools and secondary schools which typically have a more highly differentiated discipline-based curriculum.

Moreover, the early definition of this dimension placed a stronger focus on *control* of teaching (e.g., evaluation) than on its *development*. This probably reflected the fact that the early research on instructional leadership came from settings that could be characterized as turn-around situations. Subsequent research suggests that for schools more generally leadership that focuses on

building teacher capacity through professional learning, be it staff development, peer-peer networking, or peer coaching may yield better results for changing teacher practices and supporting student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2007; Marks & Printy, 2003).

The third dimension, *Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate* includes several functions: *Protecting Instructional Time*, *Promoting Professional Development*, *Maintaining High Visibility*, *Providing Incentives for Teachers*, *Developing High Expectations and Standards*, *Providing Incentives for Learning*. This dimension is broader in scope and purpose than the other two. It conforms to the notion that effective schools create an “academic press” through the development of high standards and expectations for students and teachers (Bossert et al., 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1983).

Instructionally effective schools develop a culture of continuous improvement in which rewards for student and staff are aligned with purposes and practices (Barth, 1990; Glasman, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Mortimore, 1993; Purkey & Smith, 1983). The principal is highly visible on the campus and even in classrooms. The principal models values and practices that create a climate and support the continuous improvement of teaching and learning (Dwyer, 1986; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

Empirical Research on Instructional Leadership

Thus far, I have discussed the emergence of instructional leadership as a core role of the school principal and defined the model as it came to be disseminated to practitioners. The same model of instructional leadership has also influenced research in the field as well. For example, the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale*, which follows this conceptual model, been used in over 130 empirical studies of school leadership in 15 countries. In this portion of the lecture, I will report some of the key findings from empirical studies of instructional leadership.

What Have We Learned About the Size of School Leadership Effects?

Over a decade ago Ron Heck and I reviewed the literature on school leadership effects on student learning. We concluded that the effects of principal leadership were largely *indirect*. Principals appeared to impact student learning by creating conditions in the school that would have a positive impact on teacher practice and student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a,

1996b, 1998). These conditions consisted of many of the strategic areas that I have already discussed (e.g., defining an academic mission, fostering capacity for professional learning etc.). The size of the principal leadership effects that we found across studies was statistically significant, but quite small. At that time, we suggested, however, that even a small contribution could be meaningful in the world of daily practice in schools.

More recently, other researchers have conducted up-to-date systematic reviews (e.g., Bell et al., 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004, 2006) and meta-analyses (Robinson et al., 2008) of empirical studies of school leadership effects. These reports generally confirm our earlier conclusions concerning both the nature and size of school leadership effects on student learning. Moreover, a larger sample of studies and new methodologies for review allow for a higher degree of specificity in their conclusions and confidence in their interpretation of the evidence than was possible 15 years ago when we began our own review.

What Theoretical Model Best Explains Successful Leadership for Learning?

As noted earlier in the lecture, the pendulum has swung back and forth over the past several decades favoring different leadership models at different points in time. The most recent reviews of this empirical literature appear to confirm that general leadership models (e.g., transformational, path-goal, situational theories) do not capture the type of leadership that “makes a difference for student learning” in schools (Bell et al., 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008; Southworth, 2002, 2003). Instead the reviewers suggest that successful school leadership must include a core of leadership practices that we may term educational, instructional, or learning-centered.

During the 1990s, Ken Leithwood and his colleagues at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Canada carried out a substantial program of research on the effects of transformational school leadership. Leithwood’s (1994) model was adopted from Bass’ (1985) research on transformational leadership in the private sector. After more than a decade of conducting empirical studies of transformational school leadership, Leithwood concluded that the model fails to fully capture features that explain successful leadership in school settings (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2006). That is, leadership which makes a difference in learning for students seems to incorporate dimensions that are education-specific and connected to the organizational context in which it is exercised.

This issue was analyzed with great specificity in a recent meta-analysis of school leadership effects studies conducted by Robinson and colleagues (2008). After reviewing studies of school leadership effects on learning using different leadership models (e.g., transformation, instructional), they drew the following conclusion.

In summary, although caution is needed in interpreting the evidence presented . . . it suggests that the impact of instructional leadership on student outcomes is notably greater than that of transformational leadership. It is noted that in general, abstract leadership theories provide poor guides to the specific leadership practices that have greater impacts on student outcomes. (2008, p. 22)

Which Leadership Practices “Make a Difference”?

As noted, the preponderance of evidence indicates that school principals contribute to school effectiveness and student achievement indirectly through actions they take to influence school and classroom conditions (Bell et al., 2003; Cheng, 1994; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b; Kleine-Kracht, 1991; Leithwood et al., 2004, 2006; Southworth, 2003). In their assessment of this literature, Leithwood and colleagues (2006) drew a very useful and, in my view, central conclusion concerning the interpretation of research findings on effective leadership practices in schools. They noted that effective school leaders tend to enact the “same basic leadership practices” across schools, but in a manner that is responsive to the particular contexts. This conclusion, broadly consistent with general contingency leadership theory, suggests that those who attempt to define successful school leadership practices must be content with a reasonably high level of abstraction.

By way of example, consider the most influential avenue of effects that has been identified in the literature on school leadership, shaping the school’s mission (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Glasman, 1984; Goldring & Pasternak, 1994; Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b; Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood et al., 2004, 2007; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008). Creating consensus around a clear academic mission for the school seems to characterize effective school leadership be it in an elementary or secondary school, a turn-around school or one with a tradition of success. However, the *specific actions* that leaders enact to create a shared academic vision and motivate staff towards its achievement may look quite different in different school settings.

This conclusion was foreshadowed in our own study of instructionally

effective elementary schools in California 25 years ago (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). This research sought to understand the nature of differences in schools that were instructionally effective for low SES and high SES students and communities. The research found that defining a shared mission was important in both sets of social contexts, but that the *practice* was enacted quite differently by the school leaders. In the low SES effective schools, clear, specific, measurable goals were prominently displayed around the school and featured in the principal's active efforts to create a shared vision. In the high SES effective schools, interviews with different stakeholder groups revealed clear understanding, as well as strong agreement and support for school's academic mission. Yet, in contrast to the low SES schools, this vision was embedded in the culture of the school, even in the absence of clear, specific measurable goals. The principal's actions involved supporting and developing a strong academic culture rather than "turning around" a weak culture through goal direction.

Whose Leadership Fosters Student Learning?

Discussions of school leadership must not only take into account the practices and effects of leadership, but also the sources of leadership. Up until the early 1990s, studies of school leadership focused predominantly on the principal as the source of leadership (Bridges, 1982; Erickson, 1967; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a, 1996b). During the 1990s an emphasis on teacher professionalism led to increased consideration of the role of teacher leaders as well as other sources of leadership in the school (Barth, 1990, 2001; Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Crowther, Ferguson & Hann, 2008; Harris, 2003; Lambert, 2002; Marks & Printy, 2003). This led to the explicit reconceptualization of school leadership as a distributed process (Gronn, 2002, 2003, 2009; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Spillane, 2006).

Distributed leadership refers to collaborative leadership exercised by the principal, assistant principals, department heads, teacher leaders, and other members of the school's improvement team. The rationale for focusing on distributed school leadership is grounded in the concept of sustainable change (Fullan, 2001). In schools, leadership must be able to create sustainable changes that are embraced and owned by the teachers who are responsible for implementation in classrooms (Fullan, 2006; Hall & Hord, 2001). Moreover, given the observed intensification of work activities of leaders in schools, leadership must also be sustainable for those who lead (Barth, 1990, 2001; Donaldson, 2001). As Hall and Hord (2001) conclude from their research on successful change in schools, "principals can't do it alone." Thus, increasingly, scholars assert that sustainable school improvement must be supported by leadership that is shared among stakeholders (Barth, 1990, 2001; Clift, Johnson,

Holland, & Veal, 1992; Day et al., 2006; Fullan, 2001, 2006; Gronn, 2002, 2009; Hall & Hord, 2001; Harris, 2003; Kleine-Kracht, 1993; Lambert, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003; Spillane, 2006; Stoll & Fink, 1996).

While this line of theoretical work is very attractive from several standpoints, to date there have been few empirical studies that have investigated the linkages between distributed leadership and student learning. One prominent attempt to study distributed leadership empirically was undertaken by Marks and Printy (2003). Their conclusion highlights the potential of this approach.

This study suggests that strong transformational leadership by the principal is essential in supporting the commitment of teachers. Because teachers themselves can be barriers to the development of teacher leadership (Smylie & Denny, 1990), transformational principals are needed to invite teachers to share leadership functions. When teachers perceive principals' instructional leadership behaviors to be appropriate, they grow in commitment, professional involvement, and willingness to innovate (Sheppard, 1996). Thus, instructional leadership can itself be transformational. (p. 86)

More recently my colleague Ron Heck and I completed a study of distributed school leadership effects on student learning (Hallinger & Heck, In press; Heck & Hallinger, 2009a, In press). This study of 200 elementary schools investigated the effects of distributed leadership on school academic capacity and student learning in reading and mathematics over a four year period. The findings from this study are directly relevant to our evolving understanding of school leadership for learning.

First, the results provide specific empirical support for the proposition that distributed leadership can become, *over time*, a sustaining driver for school improvement. Change in distributed leadership in these schools was directly associated with changes in academic capacity of the schools and, indirectly related to growth in student achievement. The alignment of teacher and student perceptions that changes took place in classroom practices reinforced the causal assumption of linkage between changes in academic capacity factor and growth in math achievement.

Second, we found *indirect* leadership effects of distributed school leadership on academic outcomes. This reinforces and extends an important conclusion from reviews of research on school leadership effects cited earlier

(Bell et al., 2003; Bossert et al., 1982; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008; Witziers et al., 2003). Moreover, unlike the cross-sectional research studies that have predominated in school leadership effects research, this study was longitudinal. Therefore, we were able to monitor changes in the schools over time and assess the pattern of changes in leadership with patterns of change in academic capacity and student learning outcomes. This is the first study that has located statistically significant, indirect effects of leadership on student outcomes within a *dynamic model of school improvement*. The use of longitudinal modeling offers greater confidence for the assertion that “school leadership makes a difference” in school improvement.

Third, this study also confirms earlier statements made concerning the need to adapt leadership practices to the particular school context. Evidence in the study suggested different patterns of leadership practice in schools located in challenging environments that had *turned around* and made significant improvements over the four-year period of the study. It is particularly interesting to note that in these schools it was a combination of principal stability and stronger leadership that was associated with consistent and significant growth.

Fourth, findings from the study extended earlier research in another important fashion. Analysis of the longitudinal data allows for testing the efficacy of uni-directional models that conceptualized leadership as the driver for change with reciprocal effects models that examined leadership as a process of mutual influence (Heck & Hallinger, 2009b). The latter conceptualization provided a stronger fit to the data. This finding suggests that leadership – whether from an individual leader or a group of people – is part of a systemic process of change. Change in leadership cannot be separated from change in the other social, institutional and cultural systems of the school.

These findings represent an early contribution to the emerging *empirical* knowledge base on the *effects* of distributed school leadership that is focused on learning (e.g., see Marks & Printy, 2003; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Timperly, 2009). The study highlights additional sources of school leadership and explicitly links distributed leadership to capacity building strategies designed to impact teaching and learning.

Conclusions

In this lecture I have sought to provide an historical context for the current interest in “leadership for learning”. This global interest in leadership

for learning has evolved out of earlier research and practice grounded in the concept of instructional leadership. It is a credit to the field that current conceptions of leadership have evolved through a cycle of conceptualization, research, critique, implementation in practice, further research, and reconceptualization.

Based on this review, I would summarize four key areas in which leadership for learning adds value to the earlier conception of instructional leadership.

- Leadership for Learning as an organizing construct for school leadership is not limited to the principal as was the case with instructional leadership. It incorporates the notion of shared instructional leadership (Barth, 2001; Lambert, 2002; Marks & Printy, 2003).
- Leadership for Learning incorporates an awareness that instructional leadership practices must be adapted to the nature and needs of the school's particular context; there is no one-size-fits-all model available for quick dissemination and implementation (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2006).
- Leadership for Learning integrates educational features grounded in conceptions of instructional leadership with selected features of transformational models such as modeling, individual focus, and capacity development (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008).
- Leadership for learning can be viewed as a process of mutual influence in which leadership is but one key factor in a process of systemic change (Heck & Hallinger, 2009b).

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