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A Qualitative Study of Instructional Leadership Practices in Egyptian Public Schools

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A qualitative study of instructional leadership practices in Egyptian public schools

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Jaida Mokbel Aly, declare that this thesis titled, "A qualitative study of instructional leadership practices in Egyptian public schools" and the work presented in it are my own. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University.

- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated.

- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.

- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.

- I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Signed:

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the experiences of public-school principals with instructional leadership and the barriers to the effective use of instructional leadership. Scholars found that school leaders who lead successful schools are instructional leaders. Instructional leadership is a learning-centric leadership model that strongly impacts learning. Instructional leaders engage in the process of teaching and learning to ensure the best quality education is offered to students. As studies shed light on the importance of instructional leadership for the effectiveness of the school, it is essential to understand the perception of school principals on instructional leadership. To gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of school principals with instructional leadership, six public school principals selected through purposive sampling were interviewed in this study. Semi-structured interview questions were developed using the Principals' Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). Six themes emerged from data analysis: limited autonomy, unenforced accountability, insufficient preparation for the position, principals acting as inspectors, and no basis for teachers' development programs. The six themes indicated that school principals have no experience with instructional leadership and that the rules and regulations set by the Ministry of Education prevent school principals from acting as instructional leaders. Additionally, insufficient preparation for the position limits the ability of school principals to lead learning.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Schools help individuals to climb the social ladder by providing graduates with the tools needed to compete for better jobs. Studies have shown that schools can be a "door to advancement, at least financial advancement, in our complex society "(Marzano et al., 2005, p.3). Also, a school's effectiveness is a major determinant of students' success. The effectiveness of any organization lies in its ability to obtain its objectives. School effectiveness is determined by many factors, including the ability of the school to develop students in all aspects, the achievement of students in their subjects, and the responsiveness of the school to its community (Singha, 2022). One vital criterion for school effectiveness is the high quality of school leadership (Singha, 2022). A study by Leithwood et al. (2020) stated that effective school leadership influences teaching and learning positively and accordingly has a significant impact on students' academic success. The school's impact on the future of its graduates makes it an area of interest to many researchers.

In the 1970s, several studies were conducted to understand the factors that make schools effective (Jansen, 1995). A prominent study by Edmonds (1979) that defined the characteristics of effective schools attributed strong administrative leadership to school effectiveness. Another study by Leithwood et al. (2020) concluded that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all related factors that contribute to students' learning. Leithwood and his colleagues explained that the teacher is the most important factor affecting the learning of students. As school leadership directly affects teachers' performance, leadership is the second most important factor affecting students' learning. Furthermore, in 1977, the US Senate Committee Report "identified the principal as the single most influential person in the school"

(Marzano et al., 2005, p.5). The report further clarified that the principal influences every aspect inside and outside the school that might affect students' learning. The studies and observations of different educators shed the light on the importance of school leadership for the effectiveness of the education process.

The positive impact of effective leadership on students' achievement encouraged a whole new area of study related to school leadership. At first, most of the education leadership theories sprung from leadership theories conducted in a non-educational context. As education leadership was a new field of study, educators borrowed different leadership models from the corporate world and implemented them in the school context. In the words of Hallinger (2010), "pendulum has swung back and forth over the past several decades favouring different leadership models at different points in time" (p. 9). Several models have gained momentum until proven unsatisfactory for school management. For a long period of time, educators argued whether transformational or transactional leadership models get better results. While many theorists advocated transformational leadership for school leadership, a recent review has demonstrated that general leadership models, including transformational leadership, "does not capture the type of leadership that makes a difference for student learning" and are insufficient in leading a school (Hallinger, 2010, p.8).

As education researchers continued investigating the leadership model that works best in schools, they discovered a learning-centric leadership model that could have a stronger impact on learning at schools (Hallinger, 2010). Studies found that schools that were high performing despite lacking important resources are led by instructional leaders (Hallinger, 2010). For the past two decades, instructional leadership has been a very popular leadership model that is

favored by many educators. Although it has been described differently by different scholars, one common aspect between all instructional leadership models is that they all require leaders to engage with the "technical core of education: teaching and learning" (Hallinger, 2010, p.4). Leithweood et al. (1999) suggest that instructional leadership is the focus of the leader on the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities that influence students' growth. The dimension of instructional leadership that focuses on the educational process differentiates it from other general leadership models.

Several studies have indicated that instructional leadership is vital for the effectiveness of the school (Hallinger, 1985; Hallinger, 2010; Leithwood, 1999). Although many scholars have suggested different models of instructional leadership, Hallinger and Murphey (1985) proposed the most popular model. Their model presented three main aspects of instructional leadership: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate. The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was developed based on this model. PIMRS is an instrument that measures the extent to which school principals practice instructional leadership in school (Rodrigues & Lima, 2021). The instrument rates the school principal based on eleven functions. The rating uncovers the extent to which the school principal practices instructional leadership. Both the model designed by Hallinger and Murphey and the PIMRS have acted as a guideline for principals who want to implement instructional leadership in their schools. Instructional leaders focus on developing teaching and learning within their schools. They work closely with teachers to improve their performance. Since teachers' classroom practices have the highest impact on students' learning (Hopkins, 2004,

p.93), working closely with teachers to improve their practices positively affects students'

learning.

Problem Statement

The quality of education that the school system in Egypt provides prohibits graduates from

contributing positively to society. The education system in Egypt has been suffering for a long

period of time. After President's Gamal Abd El Nasser decision to offer free education to the

Egyptian population, the demand on education surpassed the country's resources (Loveluck,

2012). This has led to the deterioration of the education quality in Egypt (Loveluck, 2013).

Challenges such as population growth along with the lack of budget allocated for education have

damaged education quality in Egypt (Loveluck, 2013). Based on PIRLS 2016 results, the

percentage of students in Egypt who "do not even meet the low benchmark in international

standards exceeds 50%" (UNICEF Egypt, n.d.). Moreover, 30% of school children are unable to

read and write (Mohamed, 2019). The national education system suffers from outdated curricula,

teachers using old-fashioned teaching styles, exams testing students' memory rather than their

understanding of the material, and poor infrastructure (UNICEF Egypt, n.d.). All these issues,

along with many others, have negatively affected teaching and learning.

To start with, public schools in Egypt have poor infrastructure. The public-school buildings are

poorly maintained. According to UNICEF Egypt (n.d.), 1 out of 5 school buildings is "unfit for

use". The number of desks is not enough to contain the number of students in the class. In some

schools, students must share desks. In other underprivileged schools, students sit on the floor

during class time. Additionally, the water and sanitation facilities lack their basic functionality.

Toilets are not clean and, in some cases, not working at all. This negatively affects the students' ability to enjoy their school life.

An additional challenge that the ministry of education has recently started to face is the rigidity of the curricula. The Egyptian curricula have not been updated for a long period of time (UNICEF Egypt, n.d.). A common problem that hinders education development is that the curriculum requires memorization rather than an understanding of the material. (Loveluck, 2012) Accordingly, students are unable to comprehend the material they study in school and relate it to their real-life experiences. However, the Edu 2.0 reform program restructured the curricula in use starting from grade 1 up to grade 5. The reform plan aims to restructure the curricula for all school grades by the year 2029/2030.

Another major challenge the Ministry of Education must face is the lack of instructional quality. Unfortunately, teachers in public schools have been facing many challenges. Teachers, who are the base of the education system, have been marginalized for a long period of time. The teachers' salaries in public schools are not sufficient to secure their basic needs. As teachers' salaries failed to secure their needs, they became more consumed with providing for their family. Teachers started to search for second jobs to increase their income. Some teachers engage in private tutoring after school's hours. Other teachers work in other fields unrelated to the teaching profession. Having a second job has distracted teachers from developing themselves professionally. As teachers engage in more than one job, their working hours increased dramatically. This leave teachers with no time to study new instructional techniques. Accordingly, teachers keep using the techniques they already know and refrain from indulging

new techniques to their instruction repertoire. This has negatively affected the instructional quality provided by teachers.

Making matters worse, the increasing population has led to an increase in the number of students inside classrooms. Accordingly, the pupil to teacher ratio has increased dramatically (Mohamed, 2019). Additionally, teachers' professional development programs are not sufficient to prepare them to deal with all the obstacles they encounter in their career. In order for the professional development programs to be effective, they need to be intensified and repeated regularly. This will require a high financial investment that might be unaffordable in a country suffering from a budget deficit. The professional problems that teachers face in their career increase their need for guidance within the school. As the programs that develop teachers professionally are limited, the school principal needs to constantly assist teachers professionally. Thus, with the increasing burdens on the teaching profession, having a leader who can assist teachers professionally became a real need. Nevertheless, school principals in Egypt refrain from acting as instructional leaders. A study conducted by Al-Samadi and Al-Mahdy (2016) found that teachers in Egypt do not perceive school principals as instructional leaders. Most school principals do not manage the instructional program nor create a positive school learning climate (Al-Samadi & Al-Mahdy, 2016). As instructional leadership focuses management attention on the activities that improve teaching and learning, refraining from acting as instructional leaders might affect education quality negatively.

In an effort to enhance education quality in Egypt, a new reform plan, EDU 2.0, was introduced in 2014 and designed to be completed by the year 2030 (Shohdy, 2016). The plan aims to develop education at all levels by updating the curricula, providing up-to-date education tools, in

addition to enhancing learning methods. In 2018, the Minister of Education announced a number of reforms to help the country reach its educational goals (Moustafa et al., 2022). Dr. Tarek Shawky, the previous Minister of Education, has declared that the aim of the new reform plan, known as EDU 2.0, is to "increase access to pre-primary schooling, improve the quality of the K-12 education system, and to advance Egypt's ranking internationally" (Moustafa et al., 2022). He further explained that in order to achieve the target of the new reform plan, the Ministry of Education will introduce a new multidisciplinary curriculum, integrate technology to education, launch continuous professional development programs for both teachers and school management, focus on changing the attitude of teachers, reform the assessment system, and enhance the infrastructure of the schools (Moustafa et al., 2022). Although the results of the reforms were remarkable in terms of the new curricula developed and the new platforms created for studying, the overall effect of the reform plan in enhancing students' learning is not announced. There is no formal record that shows the effects of the reforms introduced on the education quality.

An effort has been made to analyze the steps taken to improve the quality of education in Egypt. It is noted that the effort that has been exerted to restructure education is unprecedented. The Ministry of Education, in partnership with other parties such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and Discovery Education; has designed a multidisciplinary curriculum that tackles understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating; rather than mere memorization of the material (Moustafa et al., 2022). The new curriculum aims to change students' behaviour and develop their mental and psychological abilities (UNICEF Egypt, 2019). The curricula are also designed to enable the integration of technology into the system. Furthermore, several professional

development programs were introduced to enhance teachers' and principals' performance. However, the professional trainings for teachers and principal were conducted over a three-day period per term, a very short time for teachers and principals to be supported effectively (Moustafa et al., 2022). The short period courses hinder teachers and principals from fully utilizing the course content. Although the actual effort directed toward improving the performance of school principals is minimum, it is important to recognize that this reform plan is the first to address school principals. School principals who can display behaviors of instructional leaders by defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate as described by Hallinger and Murphey (1985) are much needed in this context to be able to contribute to the effective implementation of this reform. However, various barriers seem to have prevented them from achieving these roles, which is a factor in the current struggles.

Different researchers, such as Nariman Moustafa, Katherine King, and Rezk Marey, have analyzed the reforms that have taken place in the Egyptian education system since 2018. Although tremendous effort was exerted to analyze the reforms in the Egyptian education system, the analysis has greatly ignored school principals. Studies focused mainly on the new curricula designed, the new platform launched, and the teachers' professional development programs prepared (Bilawi, 2017; Marey et al., 2020; Moustafa et al., 2022; Shohdy, 2016). Almost no comment was made regarding the plan to improve principals' leadership abilities. The school principal's role in improving education seems to be overlooked. To begin with, professional development programs designed for school principals are minimal. Trainings are conducted over three days per term. Additionally, the program started in 2016 and was

discontinued in 2019 (Moustafa et al., 2022). This means the courses have run for 24 days over a 4-year period. Moreover, the principals are neither included in the reform planning process nor informed ahead of the teachers with the plans needed to be implemented. The message that schools' principals get is that their role is not important.

The EDU 2.0 mainly focuses on the curricula, teachers, and exams. Nevertheless, school management, which is vital for school performance, did not receive enough attention. In 1976, Weick described schools as loosely coupled systems that must be tightened to operate effectively. He added that the principal is the one who is responsible for bringing different parts of the system together so that the system is efficient and effective. Although classroom practices and materials have a direct impact on students' learning (Hopkins, 2004, p.93); the school principal is important for "setting the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, and the level of professionalism and morale of teachers" (Marzano, 2005, p.99). Different leadership models have been recommended to manage schools. However, instructional leadership has been identified by many educators as the model that gets the best results in the school context (Hallinger, 2010).

Studies have found that principals who were instructional leaders were able to succeed and turn their schools around (Hallinger, 2010). According to Hallinger and Murphey (1985), an instructional leader defines the school's mission, manages the instructional program, and promotes a positive school climate. By managing the instructional program, the principal guides and assists teachers to do their jobs better. He/she dedicates time and effort to guiding the teachers on a daily basis to improve their performance. This model of leadership is effective and cost-efficient.

The Ministry of Education has always used professional development programs to enhance the quality of the teachers. Nevertheless, teachers still use outdated teaching techniques (UNICEF Egypt, n.d.). Although providing professional development programs is mandatory for developing teachers, but not enough for teachers' professional growth. Having an instructional leader is essential for teachers' development. The instructional leaders assist teachers on their daily problems. They spot any deviation from the optimum performance and give direct assistance to the teacher on the spot.

Moreover, they are able to work hand in hand with the teachers to ensure that teachers are implementing what they learned in the professional development courses. According to Bilawi and Nasser (2017), one of the major problems with professional development is that they do not lead to a change in practice. An instructional leader will work with the teachers to guarantee that the new methods learned in the professional development courses are translated into classroom practices. Thus, transforming school principals in Egypt into instructional leaders will improve teachers' performance and ensure high returns from the professional development programs directed to the teachers. Since teachers are the most important factor for students learning (Leithwood, 2020), a leader that gets the best out of the teachers is needed for the development of the education process.

Research gap and Purpose of the study

Several studies in the field of education leadership indicate that instructional leadership is an effective leadership style for schools (Hallinger, 2010). As Hallinger (2010) stated, empirical literature confirms that instructional leadership is better in managing schools as it includes

leadership practices directly related to education. Hallinger claimed that instructional leaders can improve the quality of education by influencing teachers to do a better job. They work hand in hand with teachers on a daily basis in order to ensure that the best instruction quality is delivered to students. Accordingly, they are able to achieve outstanding results.

Although instructional leadership has been popular since the 1980s, it is not highly practiced by Egyptian school principals. A quantitative study conducted by Al-Samadi and Al-Mahdy (2016), used PIMRS to ask 604 teachers whether they regard their school principal as an instructional leader or not. The study found out that teachers do not perceive school principals as instructional leaders. The findings suggest that school principals neither manage instructional programs nor create a positive school climate (Al-Samadi & Al-Mahdy, 2016). Other research on the topic of instructional leadership focuses on single areas of the topic instead of discussing instructional leadership from all angles. For instance, a study conducted by Marey et al. (2020) attempted to re-conceptualize the concept of teacher evaluation and supervision by proposing an instructional leadership model in which school principals shift from being mistake finders to focusing on developing teachers professionally. Although the research shed light on important aspects regarding instructional leadership, it did not highlight whether school principals are fully aware of the importance of instructional leadership and understand how to implement it in practice. Since instructional leadership is claimed to bring better school outcomes, it is essential to understand the principals' perception of instructional leadership.

The study conducted by Al-Samadi and Al-Mahdy (2016) used PIMRS to identify the use of instructional leadership by school principals in public schools in Egypt. Although the PIMRS score in the study conducted by Al-Samadi and Al-Mahdy (2016) indicated that school principals

are not instructional leaders, the experiences that principals have with instructional leadership are unclear. Moreover, research on instructional leadership practiced in Egypt is limited. After exploring numerous data bases, only two researches on instructional leadership in Egypt were found. This illustrates that instructional leadership in not an area of focus by researchers and educators in Egypt. Moreover, it shows that further research is needed to understand the practices of instructional leadership in Egypt. As Al-Samadi and Al-Mahdi (2016) indicated that school principals in Egypt are not instructional leaders, further studies are needed to understand the reasons for not practicing instructional leadership in schools. Based on this gap, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences that the school principals in Egyptian public schools have with instructional leadership

Research Questions

In order to understand the practice of instructional leadership in public schools based on principals' experiences, this study seeks to answer the following question:

- What are the experiences of the school principals on instructional leadership in Egyptian public Schools?

Significance of the Study

The study sheds light on the importance of implementing instructional leadership in the Egyptian public schools. It highlights to the educators an area of improvement they have been overlooking for a long time. As the study illustrates the importance of preparing instructional leaders as part of the EDU 2.0 reforms, it might direct the attention of educators in Egypt to furtherly explore

the topic. Accordingly, researchers might start to explore the optimum use of instructional leadership in Egyptian public schools.

Moreover, this study demonstrates the experiences of the public-school principals with instructional leadership. It highlights the obstacles of implementing instructional leadership in schools from the principals' perspective. Thus, the research can be a starting point to explore ways of empowering principals in public schools. The research can also help policy makers to understand more about the principals' perspectives of the system in use. This can increase the understanding of policy makers of the needs of principals to improve their practices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section uncovers the concept of instructional leadership. In order to represent the concept of instructional leadership from different angles, several databases were used. To begin with, the library of the American University in Cairo provides access to multiple reputable databases. This has facilitated the process of finding literature on the topic. Journals such as 'School Leadership & Management', 'International Journal of Leadership in Education', 'Education as Change', 'Journal of Educational Administration', and 'Leadership & Policy in Schools' were used. These journals were helpful in exploring the topic of instructional leadership. Moreover, books written on leadership and instructional leadership were also used to understand the topic of instructional leadership. 'School Improvement for Real' by Hopkins was one of the most useful books for this research. Additionally, 'Theories of Educational Leadership and Management', 'Instructional Supervision: Applying tools and concepts', and 'Developing Successful Leadership' also added a lot to the understanding of the topic.

In the following section, topics are presented in order to enhance the understanding of instructional leadership. The conceptualization of instructional leadership by different prominent scholars will be proposed. First, a review of effective schools is discussed. Effective school research was the reason behind understanding the importance of instructional leadership. The relationship between effective schools and instructional leadership are described thoroughly. Then, instructional leadership as a concept will be explained. Afterwards, the evidence that supports instructional leadership is presented and the barriers to implementing instructional

leadership are discussed. The leadership models that work well with instructional leadership are then be described. Finally, the literature on instructional leadership in Egypt is demonstrated.

Effective Schools and Instructional School Leaders

Research on effective schools sprung in the early 1970s due to the research conducted by James Coleman in the 1960s. James Coleman's research aimed to understand the effect that schools have on students. The findings of the research concluded that family, background, and socio-economic status have the greatest effect on students' achievement (Jansen, 1995). Coleman's research showed that the school almost has no effect on students. The conclusion driven by James Coleman has decreased trust in the education system. Schools were meant to give students a chance to climb the social ladder. Nevertheless, the fact that family and socioeconomic class are the only determinants of student achievement indicates that schools are only a method of social reproduction. The results have provoked other researchers to study the effects of schools on students. Improved research methodologies encouraged educators to retest Coleman's conclusion. After examining the topic thoroughly, researchers discovered that students' achievement varies according to the school and even the class in which students are enrolled (Jansen, 1995). Accordingly, researchers realized that some schools matter while others do not. Further investigation of the findings has been conducted by Richard Murane (1981), who confirmed that schools affect student achievement. However, he added that the effectiveness of the school merely lies on teachers and students (Jansen, 1995). Richard's conclusion has leaped the interest of researchers to explore the criteria that make a school effective.

A series of research that explored factors that make schools effective was conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. Different researchers held different views on the characteristics that affect the effectiveness of the school. According to Brookover and Lawrence (1979), six main criteria characterize effective schools: schools accept the importance of basic skills mastery, staff believe that all students can master the basic skills, staff believe that students will go on with their education, staff assume responsibility for teaching basic skills, staff spend time on helping students achieve basic skills, and principals are instructional leaders who evaluate the achievement of basic skills objectives seriously (Jansen, 1995). Edmonds, another prominent researcher in the field of effective schools, highlighted five main factors that make a school effective: high expectations from all students, strong administrative leadership, an agreement that student learning is the most important school activity, strictly monitoring student learning, and an orderly but not rigid atmosphere (Jansen, 1995). Moreover, a case study by Phi Delta Kappa (1980) that explores the reason behind the success of some urban schools found that successful schools are characterized by: clearly stating curricular goals and objectives, leaders having a positive attitude, high expectations for the school, leaders having a crucial role in the school's success, employing individualized instruction techniques, creating a structured learning environment, reducing adult to child ratio, granting special project funds from the government, and having a high level of parental contact.

A key accomplishment of the research on effective schools was highlighting the importance of instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2010). Various research emphasized that instructional leadership is critical to school effectiveness. According to Marzano (2005), school leadership is the most important element in reforming schools effectively. A report issued by the US Senate

committee declared that the principal is the most "influential person in a school" (Marzano, 2005, p.5). Due to the realization that school leadership is vital for school effectiveness, "an effective principal is thought to be a necessary precondition for an effective school" (Marzano, 2005, p.5). The principal's ability to coach teachers and motivate them to do a better job, improves the quality of education. The effectiveness of the principal is linked to their ability to influence teachers to improve their instructional methods. By influencing teachers' skills positively, a principal can improve teaching and learning in the school. As a result of this realization, governments' awareness of the importance of instructional leadership has increased. Accordingly, governments such as the American government started to establish academies for school leadership and founded one leadership academy in every state (Hallinger, 2010).

Conceptualization of Instructional leadership

Prior to the 'effective school' research movement, instructional leadership was a "practice-based prescription rather than a theory-driven concept" (Hallinger, 2015, p.2). A number of school principals focused on the instruction details to improve teachers' performance and, consequently, students' results. Although this style of leadership was not conceptualized, several school principals used this leadership style to lead their schools. As researchers studied schools that were able to affect student achievement positively, they realized that they have a common leadership practice. Researchers found that school principals who were involved in the technical core of education were able to turn their schools around (Hallinger, 2010). Based on the findings, education researchers started to design theoretical frameworks for instructional leadership. In the 1980s, a number of instructional leadership models emerged to identify the leadership criteria needed for a principal to be effective (Jenkins, 2009).

Instructional leadership is a leadership style that is concerned with the direction of influence rather than its nature (Bush, 2003). Various studies demonstrated that teachers influence student learning most (Leithwood et al., 2020). As declared by OECD, along with other researchers, teachers are the core of the effectiveness of any education system (OECD, 2011). Consequently, directing leadership efforts toward influencing teachers to do a better job will result in a more effective school. Studies discovered that leadership concerned with teaching and learning brings the best out of teachers and the students (Hallinger, 2010). This has increased the popularity of instructional leadership as a method to lead teachers better and get better results.

Despite the popularity of instructional leadership in the educational context, the term is not well defined (Marzano, 2005, p. 18). Different scholars have described instructional leadership differently. In addition, a number of associations published criteria that define instructional leadership for school principals. Although all scholars agreed that instructional leadership is a leadership style that is concerned with the technical core of education: teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2010), they all described instructional leaders differently. According to Leithwood (1999), instructional leadership is a leadership approach that stresses teachers' behavior as they engage in activities that affect students. Blasé and Blasé (1999) proposed a different instructional leadership model involving two major themes. First, an instructional leader should talk with teachers to promote reflection. Talking with teachers allow them to reflect on their learning and increases their awareness of their professional practices (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). Second, instructional leaders should promote the professional growth of teachers. There are six main strategies to promote the professional growth of teachers: emphasizing the study of teaching and learning, supporting collaboration efforts among educators, developing coaching relationships

among educators, encouraging the redesign of programs, applying the adult learning principles, and implementing action research (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). The National Association of Secondary School Principals published five criteria that describe instructional leadership: implementing strategies for teaching and learning improvement, including putting the programs and school improvement efforts into action, developing a vision and establishing clear goals, providing direction in achieving the goals set, helping others to contribute for goal achievement, and developing commitment to a course of action from individuals and groups (Syarwan, 2013). The different instructional leadership models proposed have illustrated different methods of implementing instructional leadership in schools. The different models show leadership effort directed towards improving teachers' capabilities and motivation to do a better job. Nevertheless, the models mentioned are not fully tested.

Although numerous models describe instructional leadership, the "most fully tested approach of instructional leadership is that of Hallinger and his colleagues" (Hopkins, 2004, p.119). Hallinger and Murphy's model (1985) identified three functions for a principal to become an instructional leader: defining the school's mission, managing instructional programs, and creating a positive school culture. Hallinger (2010) identified the criteria for achieving the three characteristics needed to be an instructional leader. To begin with, an instructional leader should have a clear mission for the school. Ideally, the process of defining a school's mission should involve as many stakeholders as possible. Involving people while deciding on the school's mission makes them more motivated to achieve it (Camargo, 2021). Although it is recommended to involve many stakeholders in the mission creation process, the most important element in this step is to have a clear mission that can guide decision making. Having a clear mission helps everyone in

the school to make decisions easily. As teachers are aware of the school goals, they are able to make decisions that help the school achieve its goals. School principals must also make sure that the mission is communicated properly to everyone in the school.

Additionally, the principal should manage the instructional program by being involved in the process of teaching and learning. He/she should be able to effectively supervise and evaluate teachers. Supervision and evaluation are two mutually exclusive processes that guarantee the quality of teachers and, accordingly the school. The role of the principal as a supervisor is to "promote growth, development, interaction, solve instruction-based problems, and to build capacity in teachers" (Zepeda, 2007, p.29). The supervision process aims to improve students' learning by improving the quality of their teachers. In order to be effective, the supervisor needs to accurately diagnose the conceptual level of the teacher before deciding which approach he/she will use to guide teachers and develop their capacities (Zepeda, 2007). In addition, the supervisor should offer various supervisory options for the teacher to choose from (Zepeda, 2007). People, in general, learn differently. Thus, offering various options guarantees that the teacher will be able to find the method that helps them develop. On the other hand, the principal needs to evaluate teachers strictly in order to guarantee an acceptable quality of teachers in the school. Teachers' evaluation leads to a rating accompanied by a decision of whether the teacher will continue in the school or not (Zepeda, 2007). While the intent of supervision is formative and concerned with the ongoing development of teachers, the intent of the evaluation is summative and leads to a final judgment. An instructional leader is expected to act as a supervisor for teachers and to evaluate teachers' performance regularly. The role of the principal as a supervisor is to guide the teachers and encourage them to develop their performance. On the

other hand, the role of the principal as an evaluator guarantees that students will receive an acceptable level of instruction from all their teachers. Both the supervisory role of the principal and their role as evaluators are essential to the school's success. Nevertheless, the principals' role in managing the instructional program involves many other aspects. An instructional leader is expected to coordinate the curriculum objectives with the content taught in classrooms and with the students' assessment process (Hallinger & Murphey, 1985). Moreover, instructional leaders are the ones who monitor the progress of students and are aware of their students' weaknesses.

Lastly, an instructional leader is one who creates a positive and safe environment that fosters learning inside the school. A learning environment refers to the attitude of both teachers and students toward learning. Promoting a positive learning environment requires the instructional leader's involvement in indirect activities that demonstrate high learning expectations in the school (Hallinger & Murphey, 1985). In order to promote a positive learning environment, the instructional leader must protect the time of instruction. The lesson schedules should be constructed to provide teachers with blocks of uninterrupted instructional time. Furthermore, an instructional leader must maintain high visibility in the school. Walking through the campus and classrooms increases the information the instructional leader can gather about the school. It shows everyone that the principal is available and interested in the activities taking place in the school. Additionally, an instructional leader should promote professional development by informing teachers of any training opportunity, increase the activities that concentrate on developing the competencies of the teachers, and help teachers to integrate the skills they learn into their practices (Hallinger & Murphey, 1985). An instructional leader must also have a strict policy against bullying to maintain a friendly environment in the school (Camargo, 2021).

Moreover, an instructional leader should provide incentives for learning by offering students the opportunity to be honoured for their academic success. As the principal encourages academic competitions and activities in school, the principal is giving a chance for students to be recognized for their success. Furthermore, an instructional leader should provide incentives for teachers. Teachers appreciate both tangible and intangible methods of appreciation. Thus, the principal should be able to use different methods to motivate teachers to do a better job.

As instructional leadership gained momentum in the educational context, instruments were created to measure the extent to which instructional leadership is practiced in a school. One of the instruments widely used is the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale, known as the PIMRS. The PIMRS is developed based on the instructional leadership model designed by Hallinger and Murphy (Rodrigues & Lima; 2021). It measures the quality of instructional leadership based on the three factors determined by Hallinger; defining the school's mission, managing instructional programs, and promoting a positive learning climate. To assess the ability of the principal to define the school's mission, the instrument checks if the principal has framed the school goals and communicated them to different stakeholders. Moreover, the instrument checks if the principal manages the instructional program by measuring the extent to which the principal supervises and evaluates instruction, coordinates the curriculum, and monitors students' progress. Last but not least, the instrument rates the principal according to his ability to protect instructional time, maintain high visibility, provide incentives for teachers, promote professional development, and provide incentives for learning (Rodrigues & Lima; 2021). The result of PIMRS indicates the intensity of the application of instructional leadership model in the schools.

Research Evidence on Instructional Leadership

Most evidence that supports instructional leadership was "drawn from studies of urban elementary schools serving poor children" (Hallinger, 2010, p.4). Research found that schools that were able to succeed despite the lack of adequate resources have principals who use instructional leadership methods, are "highly directive in their leadership style, and use leadership as a drive to move the school forward" (Hallinger, 2010). Those leaders were a "small minority" who were able to overcome pressures that distract them from focusing on the process of teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2010). As principals take a more active role in guiding instruction by engaging in designing the curriculum, improving pedagogical methods, and focusing on teachers' professional development, the quality of education in the school improves greatly (Salem, 2016, p.5). In this section, evidence that shows the impact of the use of instructional leadership on students' learning will be discussed.

To begin with, a disadvantaged school in South Africa managed to achieve outstanding results by following instructional leadership. The principal adopted a distributed form of instructional leadership in the school that managed to achieve extraordinary results (Naicker et al., 2013). Leadership figures in the school emphasized academic success. Leaders knew the value of the human resources and regarded them as the real asset of the school. Teachers' time was valued and utilised in the most effective way (Naicker et al. 2013). As a result, the school's educational level has greatly improved. Another study conducted by Lee and Ling Chui in a secondary school in Hong Kong indicated that instructional leadership affects students' achievement positively (Lee et al., 2012). The study focused on the impact of instructional leadership on students' learning. Lee et al. (2012) pointed out that students enrolled in schools where

instructional leadership is practiced are more attached to the school. As a consequence, their results are better than those enrolled in schools where leaders refrain from practicing instructional leadership. Moreover, a study conducted in South Africa by Nobada (2019) concluded that practicing instructional leadership improves learning in schools. In a rural city in South Africa, the heads of the mathematical department adopted instructional leadership practices in their school. Aspects of instructional leadership practices were clearly stated and translated into departmental policies. The most prominent aspects of the policies can be summarized in seven points. To start with, the principal is responsible for instruction. Additionally, the principal should set the school's vision, mission, and goals. Moreover, supervising teachers is mandatory. Furthermore, a leader must maintain high visibility in the school. The leader should regularly visit classrooms and wander in the school. In addition, the leader must be involved in curriculum planning and design. Added to that, leaders must closely monitor students' learning and development. Finally, the leader should advocate continuous professional development of teachers. As the mathematical department leaders followed the departmental policies, "the school started to run smoothly," and learning outcomes were improved (Nobada, 2019, p.73).

Instructional leadership proved to be effective in the education context especially for schools located in underprivileged areas. The importance of instructional leadership arises from its ability to positively influence teachers' performance despite the lack of resources. As an instructional leader, the principal is able to directly assist and develop teachers. In districts where the budget is limited and professional development programs are not offered, the instructional leaders become the only source of help to teachers in the school. Instructional leaders offer close

guidance to teachers. This improves their performance and enhances their job satisfaction (Liu et al., 2020). Increased teachers' satisfaction decreases teacher turnover rates, creates a positive learning culture, motivates teachers to improve instruction, and increases student engagement. Therefore, preparing qualified instructional leaders is a major need for schools' improvement.

Barriers to Instructional leadership

In spite of its popularity, instructional leadership is not widely used by school principals. Since the 1990s, fewer principals are showing interest in the curriculum and in improving instruction methodologies (Hallinger, 1992). One major problem that hinders the implementation of instructional leadership by many principals is the shortage of time. School principals of public schools are required by the government to perform administrative tasks that are time consuming. The high regulations imposed on schools by the government leave no time for principals to lead teaching and learning. Accordingly, principals are transformed into 'bureaucrats of low levels' focusing only on administrative work (Syarwan, 2013). Unfortunately, lack of time to lead the educational process is a problem that school principals from different countries face. According to Timperley (2005), "Creating a professional learning context within the school that simultaneously addresses knowledge, skills, and expectations is a demanding task for the most competent and experienced leader" (p.19). In order to overcome the problem of time shortage, educators started to advocate the use of general leadership models. At first, transformational leadership, along with other general leadership models, has proved to be effective in managing the school. Nevertheless, an updated review of empirical literature stated that general leadership models "do not capture the type of leadership that makes a difference for students' learning" (Hallinger, 2010). The fact that general leadership models do not provide guidance to the

education-related practices that impact the teaching and learning process makes them insufficient for school improvement (Hallinger, 2010). According to Wang (2016), school leaders should be leaders of learning and teaching, not just organizational or administrative leaders. The role of the principal as a facilitator of learning is essential for schools to improve. Additionally, deviating from this role and merely focusing on managing the school negatively affects education quality.

Another challenge of implementing instructional leadership is the emphasis given to the principal's heroic role. The instructional leader is regarded as the only person responsible for the success of the school. This idea undermines the effort exerted by all other school members. In order to avoid both issues mentioned, the principal should implement distributed instructional leadership. Distributed instructional leadership is the use of both instructional and distributed leadership models in managing the school. The use of distributed instructional leadership reduces the time burden allocated to the principal by dividing the tasks of the principal among other members of the school (Hallinger, 2010). Distributed instructional leadership "builds a positive school climate and promotes teacher collaboration" (Liu et al., 2020, p. 445).

Other Leadership Models Used in Schools and Their Relationship to Instructional Leadership

Since the instructional leadership model is only concerned with the direction of power, other leadership models can be mutually used. A leadership model that was claimed to have a crucial role in meeting educational challenges is the transformational leadership model (Hopkins, 2004). The use of transformational leadership along with instructional leadership in schools is highly advocated. The tendency of transformational leaders to motivate members of the organization to

work harder and develop their skills makes transformational leadership a model favoured by educators. Transformational leaders seek to change the school by adjusting its structure and attempt to impact the school's culture to improve its overall quality (Hopkins, 2004). As cited by Morzano (2005, p.19), Leithwood and his colleagues stated that "transformational leadership is an expansion of instructional leadership". However, transformational leadership cannot be used independently in the educational context. Instructional leadership and transformational leadership complete each other. "Whereas instructional leadership seeks to elicit first-order effects – those which impact directly on the quality of instruction, transformational leadership aims at eliciting second-order effects which focus on building the capacity of people in the organization to produce first-order effects on student learning" (Camargo, 2021).

The transformational leadership model presented in this section was designed by Burns and enhanced by Bass. All transformational leadership models generally explain the relationship between leaders and followers. They describe leadership as a process where leaders motivate followers by connecting them to a solid body of values (Smith, 2017). Through transformational leadership, followers are converted into leaders and are encouraged to act as agents of change (Mrazano, 2005, p.14). It is suggested that the exceptional results brought by transformational leadership is "due to its emphasis on intrinsic motivation and follower development" (Northouse, 2010, p.171). According to Bass (1985), transformational leaders are those who are interested in the followers, create a strong relationship with followers, and motivate followers to achieve the mission of the organization. Bass's enhanced model of transformational leadership was created in a non-educational context. The model encompasses four dimensions: idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation (Marzano,

2005, p.14). As per Bass, in order for a leader to be effective, they must model the behavior they seek to normalize in the organization. Moreover, the leader should show interest in every person in the organization and provide additional attention to those who feel left out. Furthermore, the leader must set high standards and communicate high expectations to motivate workers to do a better job. Finally, the leader must encourage workers to find creative solutions to their daily problems. This leadership model was found to be extremely effective in improving the organization's performance. It creates a positive attitude within the organization, resulting in better performance by all members.

The prominent results achieved by the transformational leadership model in the business world encouraged Leithwood to build on it and develop the transformational model of school leadership (Marzano, 2005, p. 15). Educators claim that three factors of the transformational model of school leadership proposed by Leithwood significantly enhance teachers' efficacy: modeling behavior, inspiring group purpose, and providing contingent rewards (Hopkins, 2004, p.117). However, transformational leadership alone is insufficient for getting best results. After advocating for the use of transformational leadership in schools, Leithwood stated that this model alone "fails to fully capture features that explain successful leadership in school settings" (Hallinger, 2010). Transformational leadership focuses on cultural change and inspiring followers. However, focusing on student learning is also needed for school improvement. Transformational leadership lacks focus on student learning, a key aspect for school improvement. Accordingly, it should be used along with the instructional leadership model to bring the best results.

Another leadership model claimed to be effective when used with instructional leadership is the distributed leadership model. Distributed leadership is concerned with the source of power, not its nature. In the school context, distributed leadership is described as a "collaborative leadership exercised by the principal, principals' assistant, department heads, teacher leaders, and other members of the school's improvement team" (Hallinger, 2010). Distributed leadership distributes decision-making from one person, the principal, to other members of the school. Until the 1990s, the school's principal was regarded as the only source of power in the school (Hallinger, 2010). The school's principal is solely accountable for the overall school's performance. He/she is expected to personally supervise and evaluate each and every teacher in the school. In addition, the principal is expected to ensure the safety of students, prepare the schedule of the classes, and finish the administrative work. The work burden allocated to principals hinders their ability to act as instructional leaders. Thus, distributing leadership practices among different leadership figures in the school allows the implementation of the essence of instructional leadership in schools.

Instructional Leadership in Egypt

The Egyptian government has been working on improving its educational system for a long period of time. Recent steps have been taken to reform education in Egypt after it reached an unsatisfactory status. In 2018, the Minister of Education has launched a series of education reforms as a program referred to as EDU 2.0 (Moustafa et al., 2022). As announced by the Minister of Education, the EDU 2.0 program tackles different areas affecting schools. One important aspect of this reform plan that has not been addressed in Egypt for a long period of time is reforming the management system of the public schools (Moustafa et al., 2022). Previous

reform plans have focused on teachers with no effort directed towards principals. However, this plan considers principals as a factor for change. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education did not publish a single document about EDU 2.0 (Moustafa et al., 2022). Therefore, all information is gathered from the field or TV interviews with the previous Minister of Education, Dr. Tarek Shawky.

Effort has been made by the Ministry of Education to improve the management structure of public schools in Egypt. Although real actions directed toward improving the quality of school principals are minimal, considering principals in the reform plan is a major milestone. In Egyptian public schools, school principals are appointed by the regional educational authority of the governorate (Ministry of Education Policy and Strategic Planning Unit. ND). In order to be eligible to hold the position of a school principal in an Egyptian public school, a person should "hold a current position of a senior teacher (A)" (Habashy, 2016). Moreover, for school teachers to be promoted to the position of senior teacher (A), "a minimum of 15 years of service in the governmental education sector is needed" (Habashy, 2016). There are no other published criteria for being eligible for the position of school principal. Moreover, the process of preparing a teacher to become a principal is not announced. Thus, further interviews with the school principals will clarify the criteria needed to be a school principal.

The Ministry of Education in Egypt does not publish the job description of public-school principals. It is unknown whether managing the curriculum and supervising teachers is an official part of the principal's job. Moreover, the literature on instructional leadership practices in Egyptian public schools is limited. Thus, this section of the literature review discusses two studies available on instructional leadership practices in Egyptian schools. To start with, in 2016,

Al-Samadi and Al-Mahdy conducted a study to assess the perspectives of teachers in public

schools on the role of the school principal as an instructional leader. It was demonstrated by the

study that teachers do not regard school principals as instructional leaders (Al-Samadi & Al-

Mahdy, 2016). Teachers illustrated that school principals do not get involved in improving the

curriculum or exert the needed effort to foster a positive school environment. Nevertheless, the

principal is keen on communicating the school's mission to teachers (Al-Samadi & Al-Mahdy,

2016). Teachers in the study indicated that overall, the school principal does not practice

instructional leadership. The authors of the study justified the lack of practice of instructional

leadership in schools. They claimed that Egyptian public-school principals lack the time and

resources to practice instructional leadership (Al-Samadi & Al-Mahdy, 2016). As per Al-Samadi

and Al-Mahdy (2016), the administrative and clerical part of the principals' role usually

consumes all their time and efforts. Another study conducted by Purinton and Khalil in 2016

found that the schooling system of Egypt imposes many challenges and barriers for school

leaders to adopt instructional leadership. Principals in public schools are drained. They regularly

solve problems related to the lack of funding, such as low teachers' salaries, and have no time to

lead the teaching and learning process (Purington & Khalil, 2016).

Summary of the Literature Review

Research indicating the effectiveness of instructional leadership was conducted in urban

elementary schools serving poor students. Studies illustrated that instructional leadership

practices can make a difference in students' academic outcomes especially in underprivileged

areas. Underprivileged areas suffer from lack of resources and less spending on teachers'

development programs; thus, a leader who directs his/her leadership effort to improve teachers'
performance makes a difference.

In 2014, the Egyptian government introduced Edu 2.0 reform program to restructure the
education system in Egypt. The program tackles many educational problems; however, preparing
instructional leaders is not a part of the program. As public schools in Egypt serve
underprivileged students and suffer from the lack of resources, preparing instructional leaders is
needed. In order to argue for including instructional leadership preparation as part of the reforms,
a review of the literature on instructional leadership practices in Egypt is conducted. The
literature available on this topic in Egypt is extremely limited. A quantitative research conducted
by Al-Samadi & Al-Mahdy indicated that instructional leadership is not practiced in Egypt.
Another case study conducted by Purinton & Khalil claimed that principals in Egypt are not
instructional leaders due to time constraints. However, this case study did not focus on
instructional leadership. It seeks to analyze a leadership preparation program that utilizes US
school leadership standards in Egypt (Purington & Khalil, 2016). In addition, it seeks to
understand the problems of implementing international school leadership practices in the
Egyptian context. Other studies found on the topic of instructional leadership in Egypt focuses
on a single dimension of the model designed by Hallinger & Murphey (1985). Thus, the
literature lacks studies concerned with the experiences and perspectives of current school
principals on instructional leadership practices. As we understand from the research of Al-
Samadi & Al-Mahdy that instructional leadership is not practiced, further research is needed to
explain the reasons behind the lack of practice of instructional leadership in Egyptian public
schools.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guides this study is connected to the instructional leadership

model designed by Hallinger and Murphey (1985). This model is selected to guide the research

as it is well tested and helps analyze instructional leadership practices in schools. The model

guided the interview questions of this research. Moreover, it acted as a guideline for analyzing

the responses of the participants and understanding the experiences the participants have with

instructional leadership. As illustrated in the figure below, the model designed by Hallinger and

Murphey (1985) identifies three main functions of instructional leaders; defining the school's

mission, managing curriculum and instruction, and promoting a positive school climate. There

are ten more sub-functions related to these three main functions that were described in the model.
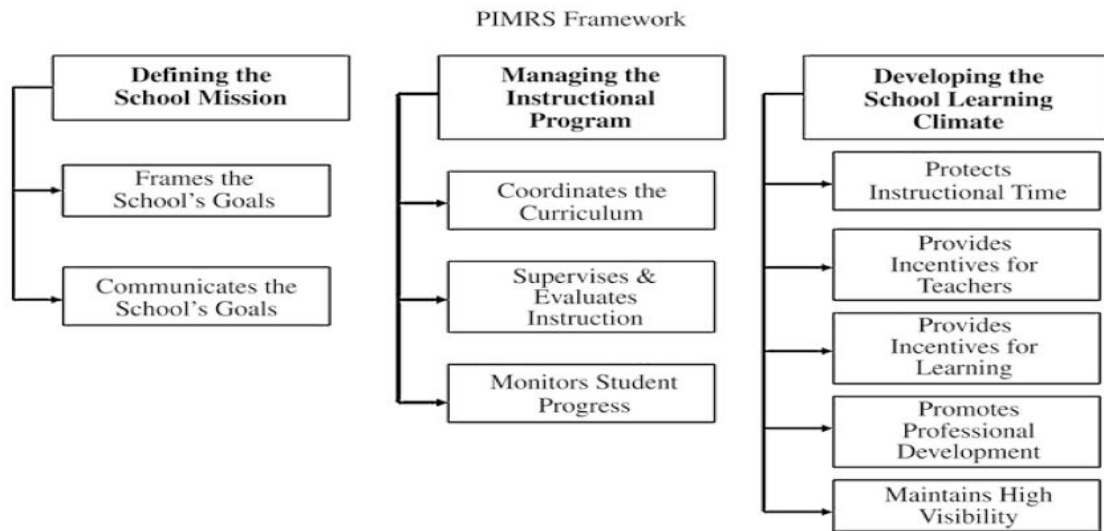

Fig. 2.2 PIMRS conceptual framework (Hallinger 1983; Hallinger and Murphy 1985, p. 221)

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the instructional leadership practices in Egypt's public schools. In addition, the study aims to understand the barriers that hinder the principal from practicing instructional leadership in the school. Therefore, the phenomenological qualitative research design is the preferred method for understanding and analyzing the perspectives of our participants. A phenomenological study is a qualitative study that focuses on people's experiences of a phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019). It allows the researcher to dwell on the experiences of participants, giving the researcher a better chance to understand the area of study. The phenomenological method aims to produce a description of the experiences of the participants in order to understand the essential structure of a phenomenon (Priest, 2002). To be able to understand the essential structure of a phenomenon using phenomenology, four necessary processes should be followed: intentionality, phenomenological reduction, description, and essence (Priest, 2002). Intentionality is the process of directing thoughts and effort toward an object. In this stage, interviews are conducted to collect as many data on the topic as possible. The interview questions are tailored to explore the topic from every perspective. Moreover, questions are designed to provide a chance for participants to share their experiences. Phenomenological reduction is the process by which the researcher "refrain from incorporating any biases" (Smith, 2017, p.44). This stage requires more effort from the side of the researcher. The researcher is required to understand his/her biases and avoid transcribing the data based on these biases. Moreover, the researcher is required to spot unnecessary information gathered from participants and eliminate them from the research. Description and essence refer to describing the phenomenon of interest after reducing all biases and uncovering its essential structure (Priest,

2002). In this stage, the researcher describes the major themes of the research and explains the overall structure of the phenomenon.

Participants

This study involves six interviews with six public school principals selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a method of selecting a sample from a population based on certain criteria (Nikolopoulou, 2022). The following criteria were followed to select the sample for this study. To begin with, the principals selected hold the position in the school for at least three years. A principal who is just appointed in the school is not eligible for the study. As a leader needs time to influence followers, a minimum of three years is needed to understand the effectiveness of the principal's leadership style. Secondly, the school where the selected principal is appointed is a mixed school. A single-gender school, whether a girls-only or a boys-only school, might have different characteristics than a mixed school. In order to ensure a fair comparison, only principals of mixed schools were interviewed. Thirdly, to increase the richness of the data, three of the selected principals were chosen from schools with poor student outcomes, high dropout rates, and many bullying incidents. The other three principals were chosen from schools with outstanding student outcomes. Selecting principals from schools with different student outcomes helped identify if any difference in the principal's leadership styles contributed to the difference in the student outcomes. Fourthly, the schools where the principals are appointed had similar demographics. Students' socio-economic levels in the schools from which principals were selected are similar. As it was indicated by the research conducted by Coleman, the family background and the socio-economic status of students affect students' achievement. Thus, by selecting schools where students' family background and socio-economic

status are similar, the effects of those factors on student outcomes were minimized. The participants are contacted during their attendance at a professional educator diploma program. The professional educator program is conducted in a private institute, and many of the students occupy the role of a school principal in a public school. As the participant agreed to participate in the research, consent for participating in the research was sent to the participant. Both parties signed the consent form before the interviews started.

Data Collection Tools

This qualitative study was conducted through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews help the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the experience of the participant concerning the area of study. Semi-structured interview questions give a chance for participants to deeply explain their thoughts and experiences. However, questions are still framed to keep the interviewer and participants on track (George, 2022). This helps the researcher to have a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The interview questions used to explore the topic were based on a comprehensive review of the instructional leadership literature. Interview questions used in this research can be found in Appendix E. Questions aim to tackle the interviewees' understanding of instructional leadership in addition to exploring their experiences with practicing instructional leadership. Moreover, questions aim to illustrate the barriers to practicing instructional leadership in public schools. According to Hallinger (2015), instructional leadership has been a "practice-based prescription rather than a theory-driven concept" for a long time. This indicates that a school principal might be practicing instructional leadership without being able to define it as a concept. Thus, it is essential to analyze the leadership practices of school principals in Egypt to know if instructional leadership is practiced. Questions are open-

ended to provide participants with an opportunity to explain their perspectives. The questions

focus on the school principal's perception of instructional leadership and what the term means to

the school principal.

The interviews took place in the cafeteria of the private institute where the participants were

selected. The optimum way to collect data was by recording the interviews in addition to note

taking. For this to happen, the participants were invited to sign written consent to record the

interview. Nevertheless, when some participants refused to record the interview, the researcher

relied solely on note-taking.

Data Analysis

The method developed by Van Kaam and popularized by Moutakas (1994) was utilized in this

study to analyze the data set. The method involves seven steps of analysis. Based on the analysis,

the researcher reached a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The analysis of the

data starts with the process of "Horizonalization". This process involves coding and grouping of

data. A major condition for this step is to treat all data equally. No data was given priority. All

data recorded was included and coded. After the data was gathered and coded, similar data were

grouped together. The second step of data analysis was the reduction and elimination of

unnecessary data. The data that did not describe the experiences of principals with instructional

leadership was eliminated. As interviews asked for participants' perception, some of the

participants dwelled on issues unrelated to the topic. Thus, the researcher was aware to not

include this data in the research to avoid confusion. Then, the third step of analysis is to group all

necessary data and organize the groups into themes. Accordingly, the themes were constructed

based on the groups created. Groups were combined to form major themes that were used to present the data in this research. The fourth step of data analysis is to check all the generated themes against the data collected to ensure that the themes are valid and represent the participants' answers well. This step needs the researcher to read the data gathered and ensure that the themes created describe the data gathered effectively. The fifth step of data analysis is to create a textural description for each participant. Textural descriptions are descriptions that utilize verbatim excerpts and quotes from participants. The sixth step for data analysis is to create a structural description for each participant. This was ensured by trying to examine the emotional, social, and cultural connections between what participants said. The final step for data analysis according to the method created by Van Kaam is to create a composite structural description that includes all the participants. This was done by creating a table that included all the themes gathered from all participants. In addition, the emotional, social, and cultural connections of participants' experiences across all the participants were examined. Lastly, the themes gathered were merged, and all participants' emotional, cultural, and social connection were considered to comprehensively understand the phenomenon (Complete Dissertation, ND).

Trustworthiness

The approval of IRB, a necessary criterion for conducting research involving humans, was secured. The IRB makes sure that human rights are respected throughout the research. The participants' consent form to participate in the research was approved by the IRB. The researcher secured consent from all participants that shows their agreement to participate in the study. Moreover, before recording any interview, a written consent for recording was signed by the participant. The researcher explained to the participants the objectives of the research and

ensured that participants understood that they can withdraw from the research at any point of time.

The researcher also assured that the confidentiality of participants was maintained. The researcher did not include any information about the participants in the research. Moreover, the data gathered will be kept in a secure place for a period of three years. No one will have access to the data collected except the researcher to protect the participant's identity.

Furthermore, member checking took place to ensure the validity and credibility of data. After transcribing the data, interviewees checked it to ensure it was correctly interpreted. Moreover, interviewees checked the themes to ensure they accurately represented their words.

The Role of the Researcher

The researcher role is essential for the accuracy and reliability of the research. The researcher selects the best method to analyze the gathered data that is suitable for addressing the research problem. Moreover, the researcher has to select the theoretical framework that guided the research and helped answering the research question. In this qualitative study, the researcher acts as the data collection tool. The researcher conducts interviews with participants to collect data for the research. In the data collection process, the researcher must act in a non-biased manner. This requires the researcher to prepare interview questions based on the theoretical framework selected for the study and to ask the questions without showing any biases. In order to reduce the risk of being biased, the researcher transcribed all data without excluding any data.

As a person working in the private education sector in Egypt, I always had a perception about the public schooling system in Egypt. Attending a private school, private university, and working in

a private school; shaped my perception of public schools in Egypt. Moreover, the biases that is spread through word of mouth about the public education sector affected my perception about the topic. To avoid being biased, I revised my interview questions with my supervisor, I avoided sharing my perspectives with participants, and my probing questions were designed to give a chance for participants to explain the topic in details. Moreover, I followed the data analysis method designed by Van Kaam and popularized by Moutakas to analyze the data. Furthermore, participants were selected based on the criteria mentioned in the participants' section. I avoided selecting participants I knew to minimize any biases in interpreting the data.

Chapter 4: Findings

This qualitative study aims to explore the principals' experiences of instructional leadership. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were developed based on the PIMRS framework designed by Hallinger and Murphey (1985). The data gathered through the interviews was analyzed using the guidelines that were developed by Van Kaam and popularized by Moutakas (1994). Data analysis resulted in five major themes that illustrate the experiences of school principals on instructional leadership and the obstacles that limit the effective implementation of instructional leadership. In this section, the themes resulting from data analysis is presented. The five major themes are limited autonomy, unenforced accountability, insufficient preparation for the position, principals are acting as inspectors, and no basis for teachers' professional development programs.

Limited Autonomy

The Egyptian education system is highly regulated. School principals are appointed by the government to enforce the system that the Ministry of Education has imposed. Principals in this study perceived themselves as enforcers of the system rather than higher-level employees who can add to the system. For example, principal #3 said "My job is to make sure that teachers are complying with the rules that the ministry of education has set". In the current system, school principals act as a link between the Ministry of Education and the teachers.

To begin with, the Ministry of Education sets a mission for schools. The six principals interviewed have the same mission for their school. "At the beginning of the year, the Ministry of Education informs us with the mission and the goals of the school" claimed principal #1. The

principals do not participate in the process of setting the mission and the goals for their school. "My role as a principal is to breakdown the mission and the goals of the school to mission and goals for each department" added principal #6. After breaking down the mission and goals, the school principal dictates each department's mission and goals for the year. Accordingly, teachers are unaware of the overall mission and goals of the school. In addition, teachers are vaguely informed of their role in achieving the school's mission and goals. As stated by principal # 6, "I do not directly tell teachers about the mission and goals of their department. However, in the beginning of the year, I meet with each department and tell them the plan for the year that will help us achieve the mission and goals set by the Ministry." Isolating the principal and the teachers from the mission creation process decreases their sense of belonging to the place. The principal and the teachers do not recognize the link between their job and the overall goal of the place. Ignoring the principal and the teachers from the mission creation process affects their work morale negatively. As employees lack understanding about the importance of their role in achieving the mission of the school, they become less motivated. Since an instructional leader is one who involves everyone in creating and achieving the mission of the school, isolating the principal from taking a part in defining the mission of the school with teachers affects his/her ability to become an instructional leader. Furthermore, since the ministry of education set unified mission and goals for all schools in Egypt, the mission and goals are not oriented to the conditions of each individual school. Goals are general and do not focus on the academic improvement of students. As mentioned by principal #2 "one of the school goals is to have more exhibitions during the year so that students improve their soft skills". Principal #2 added that "another goal that the Ministry enforced is to increase students' involvement in activities,

accordingly, the ministry forced schools to have a fun day ever week so that students can wander between different activities". As it can be inferred from the goals, the goals are not related to the academic enhancement of students. Although the process of developing the school goals is important, having clear goals that focus on academic progress are more important for instructional success. As the ministry of education imposes on schools the goals needed to be achieved, and since the goals are very general to fit all schools in Egypt, the goals are ineffective in enhancing the instruction quality of the school. This hinders the principal from acting as instructional leader as the principal has to enforce goals that focus on improving the soft skills of the students rather than focusing on academic mastery.

Moreover, the curricula are strictly regulated by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education constructs the curricula and passes it to the schools. Along with the curriculum, there is a teacher manual that includes the plan for each lesson. "The teacher manual includes the lesson plans and the activities to be done in each lesson" said principal #5. Principal #5 added "I have minimum input when it comes to curricula as the Ministry of Education dictates what to be done and when to do it". In this case, even the teacher has a minimum role in constructing the curriculum for his/her class. Teachers have no right to prepare their lessons using external sources. They must stick to the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education. Imposing lesson plans on teachers hinders their creativity. Teachers are asked to follow standard lesson plans which prohibits teachers from thinking outside of the box. Principals also have no role in helping teachers to improve their lesson plans and include more creative ideas for teachers as the plans set by the Ministry of Education have to be followed. This again limits the ability of the principal to act as an instructional leader. According to the instructional leadership model designed by

Hallinger and Murphey (1985), an instructional leader should take a part in coordinating the curricula. The strict guidelines for the curriculum that the Ministry of Education sets and asks teachers to follow, leaves no space for principals to coordinate the curricula with teachers and act as instructional leaders.

Furthermore, the ministry of education set the criteria for evaluating teachers by the principal and by the subject supervisor. The evaluation forms are standard across all subjects. Neither the school principal nor the subject supervisor can change the criteria upon which the teacher is evaluated. There are three forms for evaluating the teacher. The forms can be found in appendix A, B, and C. "In the teacher evaluation form, I basically rate the teacher based on certain criteria. I am not allowed to give the teacher a bad rating unless I have given them a written warning concerning this criterion throughout the year", principal #1 illustrated. The evaluation form that the Ministry of Education requires the school principal to use mainly evaluates teachers' attitudes rather than instructional quality. The form consists of 10 criteria upon which the teacher is evaluated. It asks the principal to rate the teacher from 1 to 5 based on his/her appearance, the way he/she communicate with his/her colleagues, his/her relationship with his/her students, his/her participation in school activities, his/her positive behavior towards education, his/her participation in solving problems, his/her participation in professional development programs, his/her punctuality, his/her effort to improve his/her skills, and his/her ability to keep a respectful relationship with the parents. Based on the evaluation form required to be filled by the principal, the school principal should not have an opinion about the teachers' teaching capabilities. The evaluation form asks the principal to evaluate the punctuality of teachers not their performance. This illustrates that the principal is regarded as an administrative

worker rather than an experienced educator who can evaluate the quality of the teachers. A basic criterion for being an instructional leader is to evaluate teachers professionally. Since the ministry of education prohibits school principals from evaluating the quality of teachers in classrooms, principals are unable to fully act as instructional leaders.

Additionally, school principals have no tools to motivate teachers. The Ministry of Education has an extremely rigid human resources system. Teachers are promoted every five years. The system does not put extraordinary teachers on the fast track of promotion. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education recently started considering fast-track promotions for teachers holding master's degrees or Ph.D. Prinicpal#1 clarified "I was promoted before the five years period as I achieved a master's degree in education". However, exceptions are only for high degree holders, it has nothing to do with teacher performance or the positive evaluation report from the school principal. Accordingly, the school principal has no power over teacher promotion. In addition, the Ministry of Education does not allocate a budget for motivating teachers. The school principal cannot give a bonus to a teacher who has done a tremendous job. There isn't even a budget for printing certificates of honour to promote hardworking teachers. "I use my own salary to print certificates of honour for teachers" added principal#4. Motivating teachers is vital for creating a healthy work environment. Having a rigid system that prevent rewards affects the school environment negatively. As illustrated by Hallinger and Murphey (1985), an instructional leader is one who develop the school learning climate by providing incentives for teachers. Prohibiting principals from providing monetary incentives or promoting hard working teachers limits their ability to act as instructional leaders.

On the other hand, school principals are not capable of penalizing a teacher who is not well performing in class. "The maximum I can do is to deduct three days of the teachers' salary" explained principal #3. Neither the principal nor the Ministry of Education has the right to fire a teacher no matter how bad the teacher is performing. The only reason for firing a teacher is for the teacher to commit a crime. "As a school principal, I can give the teacher a bad evaluation or deduct three days of his/her salary" clarified principal #1. A bad evaluation will delay the promotion of the teacher. As mentioned before, teachers' promotion takes place every five years. However, a major condition for the promotion is to have three good consecutive evaluation reports prior to the promotion. If any of those reports is not satisfactory, then the promotion is delayed. The lack of ability to stop an underperforming teacher from teaching risks the students' outcomes. A school principal should be able protect students by ensuring the quality of teachers in classes meets basic standards. As a teacher can never be fired or stopped from entering classrooms for poor performance, the principal lacks the ability to protect the quality of instruction in the school. In order for an instructional leader to be effective, he/she must be able to take action based on teachers' evaluation. Lacking the ability to act based on the evaluation score of teachers makes the evaluation of teachers meaningless.

Unenforced Accountability

Teachers in the public education system are hardly held accountable for their performance. Teachers neither benefit from good performance nor suffer from bad performance. The worst that can happen to a teacher for bad performance is a below average evaluation report or a three-day deduction from the monthly salary. However, teachers in the public system cannot get fired

for performing badly. Accordingly, students continue to suffer from having poorly performing teachers.

The Egyptian culture plays a major role in holding back the teachers from being accountable. Principle #2 confessed "I can never hurt a teacher in the annual evaluation, this is just too much". Principal #4 claimed "the culture in Egypt fights accountability, no matter what the teacher does, if I gave the teacher a bad evaluation I will be regarded as a monster". This culture makes it extremely hard for a teacher to get an honest evaluation of his/her performance. "I have been working for almost 20 years, during this period I have never encountered an incident where a teacher is given a bad evaluation" stated principal #5. It seems that to have a bad evaluation report, the teacher must do something extreme.

There is also a tendency to blame external circumstances for the occurrence of most problems. The passing rate of the exams is the benchmark for measuring teachers' performance. As the passing rate of a class drops, principals tend to check the difficulty level of the exam. The six principals claimed that difficult exams are a valid reason for bad performance. "I cannot blame the teacher for students' performance if the exam is difficult" stated principal #6. Principal #2 clarified "difficult exams are out of the hands of the teacher, if all of the exam questions are indirect then it is expected that the pass rate will drop". Thus, in case the school principal found the exam difficult, the teacher is not held accountable for the students' results.

Insufficient Preparation for The Position

The process of preparing candidates for being a school principal is insufficient. To begin with, for someone to apply for school principal or vice principal in the public schooling system, one

must spend a minimum of 15 years as a teacher in a public school. Any teacher can apply to this position, including physical education teachers. The only requirement of applying for this position is to have extraordinary evaluations throughout your career and be a teacher A. Being a teacher A requires spending 15 years in a public school. If the applicant satisfies both conditions, then the applicant is eligible to be a school principal or a vice principal.

In order to apply for the position, the candidate must take the preparatory course for principals and vice principals in the teacher professional academy. The course consists of five modules. The first module discusses the management of change in 8 pages. The second module explains cultural institutes and quality control in schools in 8 pages. The third module illustrates different models of school management. This module states the qualities needed to be a leader. In addition, it briefly described democratic leadership, autocratic leadership, transformational leadership, and laissez-faire. The module discusses all mentioned points in 12 pages. The fourth module described the technical and managerial qualities required for being a school principal. The module states the role of the school principal, describes the personal traits needed for a principal, and illustrates the roles and responsibilities of the school principal. The module covers the mentioned points in 7 pages. The final module describes professionalism in 8 pages.

The whole program that prepares the candidate for being a principal is brief. The course material does not encourage critical thinking. The readings are short, and each topic is covered in few sentences. Moreover, instructional leadership is not discussed in the modules. The modules illustrate that the Ministry of Education does not intend to prepare instructional leaders. The whole training course introduces principals to the meaning of leadership. It neither prepares them for practical experience nor introduces them to instructional leadership.

In order to apply for the position, the candidate is required to pass an exam by the end of the program. The exam asks direct questions that require short answers. Exam questions tests memorization rather than understanding and creativity. The sample exam shows that the candidate is required to memorize the definitions of different topics. Most sample exam questions start with define, describe, and state. Questions do not ask the candidate to reflect on the course material. Principals are required to sit for the exam every two years in order to renew their eligibility for the position.

After passing the exam, the candidate sits for an interview to decide whether the candidate is suitable for the job or not. The interviewer determines if the candidate has the leadership skills to lead a school. If the interviewer finds the candidate suitable for the job, then the candidate is appointed as the principal or vice principal of the school. However, the position lasts for two years. Afterward, the candidate must sit for the preparatory principal course and pass the exam to renew the contract.

Principals Act as Inspectors

The six principals interviewed stated that a big part of their job is to ensure that teachers are in line with the timeline set by the Ministry of Education. The school principal checks that the teachers follow the time plan the Ministry of Education set for the curricula. At the beginning of the year, the Ministry of Education distributes the teachers' handbooks to all teachers. The handbook contains the lesson plans and timeline for each lesson. The timeline dictates teachers when they must start and end each of their lessons. "My role as a principal is to make sure that

teachers prepare their lessons as per their handbooks and they are following the time plan set" stated principal #1.

Principals are responsible for maintaining a learning climate in the school. The six school principals claimed that they attend the morning salute every day to ensure that teachers and students are punctual and ready to start their school day. "After the morning salute, I walk through classes to make sure that the teachers and students are settled in their classrooms" added principal #1. The principals are keen to have an environment that helps students to learn. Discipline is the number one priority for all principals interviewed. Principals are keen to maintain high visibility in the school and ensure that students and teachers are disciplined.

School principals never interfere in the teachers' teaching styles or content. "It is not my job to comment on the teachers' teaching techniques" claimed principal #2. The principal is keen to ensure that teachers follow their guidelines and the time plan. Nevertheless, principals do not help teachers with the lesson content or the teaching style. "I am not specialized in all subjects, the only person responsible for supervising the teacher is the subject supervisor," said principal #1. "My job is limited to checking that the teacher is following the curriculum and the time plan" added principal #1.

By the end of each year, teachers and school principals get evaluated. The evaluation form of the school principal can be found in appendix D. The evaluation form is divided into four sections. The first section includes the information of the principal. The second section includes the behavior penalties for the year. The third section includes the accomplishments of the principal throughout the year. The fourth section rates the principal for the quantity of work accomplished,

the quality of work accomplished, the extent by which the principal improved work performance at school, students' results, professional development courses the principal enrolled in, the principal's attitude toward students and teachers, and punctuality.

No Basis for Teachers' Professional Development Programs

Teachers in public schools attend in-house training and training conducted by the Ministry of Education. Both training courses are not based on the needs of the teachers or tailored to suit the developmental level of the teacher. Trainings are systematic and conducted through the whole republic of Egypt.

Training conducted by the Ministry of Education usually introduces new curricula launched. It also trains teachers to use new teaching techniques. The Ministry of Education usually asks each school to send only one subject teacher to attend the training. Most training courses take place over a period of one to three days. "Training conducted by the Ministry of Education is short and does not always lead to change" claimed principal #1. The trainee has limited time to discuss the topic, which makes interaction minimal. "There isn't even a follow up training to capitalize on the new material introduced" added principal #1. Teachers are asked to return to their school and pass on the knowledge gained in training to the rest of the teachers. The success or failure of the knowledge transfer lies to a great extent in the hands of the teacher that attended the training. Principal #1 commented on the professional development training: as a principal, I must send different teachers to the training courses conducted by the Ministry of Education. If I always send the same teacher, I will be accused by other teachers of unfair treatment. Unfortunately, not

all teachers are able to comprehend the material and pass it on to their colleagues. Thus, the success of the transfer process is dependent on the teacher that attended the training.

In-house training varies from one school to another according to the policy set by the school principal. In-house training courses are either planned at the beginning of the year or developed based on problems occurring during the year. All principals interviewed have a person in the school responsible for organizing developmental trainings for teachers. In the beginning of the year, the teachers' training unit manager asks all teachers about their needs for the coming year. The needs are then discussed with the school principal. Afterwards, training courses are developed to respond to the teachers' needs. "Teachers know exactly what they want to work on" claimed principal #5. "I try to help teachers develop their capabilities by offering the training they need" continued principal #1. When asked about the common needs of the teachers, principal #6 replied "teachers have problems in using technology, they particularly ask for courses that help them use smart boards, excel, word, and power points".

Training can also take place based on a common problem facing most teachers. Principals keep an eye on the percentage of passing students from each class. If the percentage is low across a certain subject, the principal discusses the issue with the subject supervisor. As all principals interviewed claimed that they do not specialize in spotting technical issues, the subject supervisor is asked to understand the causes of the problem. Based on the causes, training is developed. The training is usually conducted by the subject supervisor and is done only when the problem is common.

In-house training is helpful in dealing with problems teachers are facing. Nevertheless, it does not develop pedogeological skills for teachers. All principals interviewed stated that the training conducted is general and is not tailored according to the developmental level of the teacher. The training usually introduces teachers to new technological skills or tackle a common problem all teachers face.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Principals acting as instructional leaders are involved in the technical core of the education process to improve the education quality in their schools (Hallinger, 2010). Research revealed that instructional leaders could achieve remarkable results despite limited resources (Hallinger, 2010). The advocacy for instructional leadership sheds light on the importance of having an instructional leader in schools. As the Egyptian education system reached an unsatisfactory status, EDU 2.0 reform plan was launched to restructure the education system. The launched reform plan has tackled areas that needed to be reformed for a long period of time. The new curricula developed was one of the most important milestones achieved. Nevertheless, the overall effect of the improvement of Egyptian education system has been unannounced.

Since instructional leadership proved to be a successful leadership method for turning schools around, it is essential to explore the topic of instructional leadership in the Egyptian context. Research conducted by Al-Samadi and Al-Mahdy (2016) stated that teachers do not perceive school principals as instructional leaders. Thus, this research is conducted to understand the experiences of school principals with instructional leadership and the barriers to practicing instructional leadership in schools. Participants contributing to this research have helped in understanding the role of the principal in public schools. The instructional leadership model developed by Hallinger and Murphey (1985) is the theoretical framework for this study. The model identified instructional leaders as ones who define the school mission, manage the instructional program, and develop a positive school learning climate.

The Process of Mission Development and Communication

According to Hallinger and Murphey (1985), the mission development process encompasses two functions, framing the goals and communicating the goals. The goal of this process is to work with teachers to ensure that the school has "clear, measurable, time-based goals focused on the academic progress of students" (Hallinger, 2010). The goals help teachers in every decision that needs to be taken. For instance, if the school has a goal of focusing on mastering basic subjects, then teachers will direct their effort to help students master their basic subjects. Activities that focus on personality development will be canceled if students need extra time to comprehend the basic subjects. Having clear goals help teachers to focus their effort on things that matter most to the school.

Developing School Goals

It has been revealed from the interviews that school principals do not have a role in developing the goals of the school. All principals interviewed have the same goals for their schools. The goals are defined by the Ministry of Education and passed down. Neither the school principal nor the teachers participate in the mission building process. The school goals are general and do not focus on the academic progress of students. The goals that were mentioned in the interviews revolved around personality development activities. Goals included increasing the number of exhibitions in schools, having more sports days, and ensuring that all students pass the final exams. None of the goals mentioned by the principals focused on academic mastery, student research, educational field trips, or any of the activities that develop the students academically. Although the process of developing the goals is less critical than having clear goals focusing on

academic progress (Hallinger, 2010), it is vital that the principal contribute to the goal creation

process. School principals are aware of their students' needs and teachers' capabilities. This

makes them the most qualified people for setting the goals for their schools. As the Ministry of

Education sets the goals for schools, the goals become general and not specific to the needs of

each school. Moreover, involving teachers in the process of goal setting increases their

motivation to achieve the school goals (Camargo, 2021). Thus, having a set of general goals that

is unified across all schools in Egypt, makes the goals less useful. Furthermore, it restricts the

ability of the school principal to lead the instruction as the goals are not related to the school

needs.

Communicating School Goals

For goals to be effective, they must be communicated throughout the school. Teachers should be

aware of the academic goals of the school. Additionally, they must support the goals and

incorporate them in their daily activities (Hallinger, 2010). For teachers to support the goals and

use them as a guideline for their daily activities, goals must be clearly communicated. Teachers

must understand the overall mission of the school. Furthermore, they should be aware of the

decisions that must be made to help the school achieve its goals. The interviews conducted with

the school principals illustrated that school goals are not communicated properly to the teachers.

School principals revealed that they breakdown the goals into sub-goals for each department.

Afterwards, principals meet with each department separately to dictate the department with the

yearly plan. In this process, teachers are unaware of the school goals, they only have a plan to

follow throughout the year. This affects the autonomy that teachers have over their classes

negatively. The goals are created to direct teachers in their day-to-day activities. Goals should

function as a reference for the teachers' decision-making process. Nevertheless, teachers in public schools are not aware of the school goals. As quoted by one of the principals "I only communicate to teachers the plan for achieving the overall goal of the school." This negatively affects the ability of teachers to make decisions that help achieve the goals of the school.

Moreover, having unified goals for the whole school ensures that everyone in the school is working in the same direction towards achieving the school goals. Dividing the school goals into departmental goals creates a division in the school and a cultural isolation between departments. As mentioned by Weick (1976), the role of the school principal is to connect different parts of the school together for the whole system to work effectively. In order to connect all departments together, the school goals must be unified across departments. All teachers should understand their role in achieving the overall goal of the school. As teachers understand their role in helping the school reach its goals, teachers have better understanding of decisions that must be made. For instance, if the school goal is to help students master basic subjects, then an art teacher will be more willing to give her/his class period to a math teacher if the students have problems in understanding the math material. Having clear goals that are well communicated will help teachers and principals to make decisions easily. Nevertheless, school principals interviewed refrain from communicating the overall goal of the school. They focus on communicating to each department the detailed plan for the department. This decreases the flexibility of teachers while making decisions. Moreover, it makes schools a loosely coupled system.

Managing the Instructional Program

According to Hallinger and Murphey (1985), an instructional leader is one who manages the instructional program by coordinating the curriculum, supervising and evaluating instruction, and monitoring students' progress. This dimension of instructional leadership requires the school principal to have expertise in teaching and learning, in addition to a commitment to school's improvement (Hallinger, 2010). The school principal is required to deeply influence the instruction that takes place in the school by monitoring teachers, students, and helping in the coordination of the curriculum. By managing the instructional program, the school principal is required to manage the technical core of the school. This factor differentiates instructional leadership from other leadership models that are not education oriented.

Coordinating the Curriculum

Curriculum coordination is crucial in determining the effectiveness of the school. In order for the curriculum to be well coordinated, two important criteria must be met (Hallinger, 2015). Firstly, the objectives of the curriculum must be aligned with the content taught in class and the students' tests (Hallinger, 2015). The principal must supervise the lesson plans to make sure that they help in achieving the curricular objectives. It was illustrated in the interviews that school principals have no role over this criterion. The Ministry of Education designs the curricula and the teachers' handbook that will be used by teachers in classrooms. The principal must follow the curricular objectives set by the Ministry of Education. However, the principal has a role in making sure that teachers are planning their lessons as illustrated by the teachers' handbook. This shows that even teachers have minimum input in their lesson planning process as they must follow the criteria set

by the ministry of education. As for the exams, most exams are set by the Ministry of Education and distributed along schools. The school principal has no power over exams. The principal is only required to make sure that the teacher is following the curricula timeline set by the Ministry of Education to ensure that exam topics are covered by the teachers during classes. As for the quizzes and monthly exams that is designed by the school, the principals interviewed claimed that they do not interfere in the exams designing process. Principals explained that their knowledge in different subjects is limited which makes them unqualified to prepare exams for different subjects. The principals interviewed added that there is a subject coordinator for each subject who makes sure that exams designed by teachers meet the criteria set by the Ministry of Education.

Secondly, the curriculum must have a high degree of continuity across grade levels (Hallinger, 2015). The curricular content should build on previous years. The concepts taught must be smoothly continued from one year to the next. For the second criteria to be achieved, teachers across grade levels must work together to coordinate content and discuss curricular issues (Hallinger, 2015). For the second criteria to be successfully fulfilled, the principal must have a strong role in organizing and leading meetings across grade levels and departments to ensure prominent level of collaboration is taking place. Since the Ministry of Education designs the curriculum across different grades and strictly set the plan of teaching the curriculum, school principals do not have input in coordinating the smooth flow of material from one year to the next one.

Supervising and Evaluating Instruction

The process of supervising and evaluating teachers are two independent processes both vital for maintaining high quality of teachers. The role of the principal as a supervisor is to "promote growth, development, interaction, solve instruction-based problems, and to build capacity in teachers" (Zepeda, 2007, p.29). A distinguished supervisor uses different methods to develop teachers. The method used by the supervisor should match the developmental level of the teacher and the teacher's learning style (Zepeda, 2007). The different methods used to develop teachers includes peer coaching, clinical development process, mentoring, action research, and courses (Hallinger, 2010). It can be inferred from the interviews that the supervision process in public schools is not done by the school principal. Interviewed principals claimed that they visit classes for administrative purposes and not for supervisory purposes. Class visits by the principal last for five minutes and aim to make sure that the teacher is following the guidelines set by the government. Thus, principals' visits seem more like an inspection process where the principal makes sure that the teacher complies with the regulations set by the Ministry of Education.

On the other hand, the evaluation is a summative process of assessing teachers' qualifications. The process of evaluation usually assigns a score to the teacher based on the teachers' performance. The purpose of evaluation is to make sure that teachers who are not meeting the minimum teaching standards set by the school will not continue teaching. Thus, the process of evaluation is always accompanied by a decision of whether the teacher will continue working in the school or not. In the Egyptian public school system, the principal does not have the authority to dismiss a teacher. No matter how bad the evaluation score of the teacher is, the teacher will continue to teach in the school. The evaluation process can only delay the promotion of the

teacher. Thus, the actual purpose of the evaluation process is not allowed by the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, the criterion for evaluating teachers is strictly set by the Ministry of Education. The principal does not set the criteria of evaluation that best measures the quality of teachers based on the school standards. The evaluation forms that the principal needs to fill requires the principal to evaluate teachers based solely on their discipline and attitude in the school. Principals are only required to evaluate the teacher based on their behaviour rather than the quality of their work. Since principals are not empowered to determine the criteria for evaluating teachers nor act based on the evaluation score card, principals are refrained by the Ministry of Education from acting as instructional leaders.

Monitoring Students' Progress

School principals monitor students' progress mainly through exam results. The exam results are useful in diagnosing programmatic student weaknesses and evaluating the effect of a change in school's instruction program (Hallinger, 2015). An effective instructional leader will use exam results to improve instruction at their school. The school principal discusses the exam results with teachers to capitalize on learning opportunities. Additionally, the principal help teacher in analysing test results to better understand students' progress. The school principals interviewed claim that they seek to monitor the students' exam results. However, principals do not look at every student's result. They monitor the average grade for each exam and the percentage of students who pass the exam. Principals claimed that if the percentage of students who pass the exam is acceptable then no further action is required. Nevertheless, if the percentage of students who pass the exam is low, they ask the subject supervisor to assess the cause of the problem and work with the teacher on solving it. School principals do not analyse exam results for

improvement purposes. They are only concerned with increasing the number of students who pass the exams. Thus, as inferred from the interviews, improving the instruction quality is not the purpose of the students' exam monitoring process.

Developing a Positive School Learning Climate

According to Hallinger and Murphey (1985), an instructional leader develops the school learning climate by protecting instructional time, providing incentives for teachers, providing incentives for learning, promoting professional development, and maintaining high visibility. Developing a positive learning climate helps teachers to do their job more effectively. This dimension of instructional leadership is more general than other dimensions (Hallinger, 2015). Moreover, this dimension has much in common with transformational leadership models (Hallinger, 2015). A school that is instructionally effective must have a learning climate that encourages teaching and learning. Thus, the role that the principal plays in developing a positive learning climate is essential for school effectiveness. It is demonstrated in the findings section that school principals exert tremendous effort to develop a learning climate in the school. Nevertheless, school principals face obstacles in maintaining a positive learning climate due to the restrictions imposed by the ministry of education.

Protecting Instructional Time

Research demonstrated the importance of providing teachers with uninterrupted instructional time (Hallinger, 2015). It is claimed that all classroom management skills are ineffective if teachers are interrupted during instruction time. To protect instruction time, school principals must set and enforce policies to prevent classroom interruption (Hallinger, 2015). The interviews

conducted with school principals showed that school principals are keen to protect instruction. School principals have strict rules to protect teaching time. All principals interviewed have a rule at their schools that forbid anyone from contacting teachers during class time. Moreover, floor supervisors are appointed to make sure that instruction is not interrupted. Floor supervisors are allocated to every floor to make sure that classes are operating smoothly. Floor supervisors forbid anyone to call teachers during the lesson. In addition, floor supervisors interfere to solve problems with any troubling student so that the class goes back to normal as soon as possible.

Provide Incentives for Teachers

Teachers' incentives should be part of the human resource management system that align the goals and outcomes with the rewards provided for teachers. The salary system on its own is not enough to motivate teachers (Hallinger, 2015). Thus, principals should be able to reward teachers formally and informally to motivate them to do a better job. It is claimed that monetary rewards are not enough to motivate teachers (Hallinger, 2010). Recognizing teachers is extremely vital for motivating them to do a better job. Thus, using both formal and informal methods of motivation is vital for incentivising teachers (Hallinger, 2015). It is obvious from the interviews that school principals in public schools are keen to provide incentives for teachers to do a better job. Principals try to create a climate where teachers feel appreciated. Although the government restricts school principals from providing monetary rewards for teachers, principals try to motivate teachers using other intangible methods. For instance, school principals commemorate highly performing teachers in front of the whole school. Principals know that teachers' are not monetarily rewarded properly and try to compensate teachers by always complimenting their

effort in front of everyone. On the other hand, teachers are aware that principals have no power

to compensate them financially and they appreciate being honoured in front of the school.

Providing Incentives for Learning

An instructional leader develops positive learning climate by valuing and praising students'

academic achievement (Hallinger, 2010). To create an environment that values students'

academic achievement, the principal must provide several opportunities for students to be

rewarded and recognized in front of everyone in the school (Hallinger, 2015). Principals in

public schools claim that they use different methods to value high achieving students. It is

revealed from the interviews that school principals constantly organize debates and science

competitions between different classes. The winning team gets honoured in the morning salute in

front of the whole school. Moreover, school principals sometimes give gifts for the winning team

to show their appreciation for their effort. The gifts are of small monetary value and the money

used to buy the gift is collected from the principal and the teachers. The competitions aim to

promote learning and encourage students to work hard on their lessons.

Promoting Professional Development

Research has revealed that principals who support teachers to participate in professional

development programs have better students' outcome (Hallinger, 2015). To promote professional

development, principals can arrange or inform teachers with suitable professional development

opportunities (Hallinger, 2015). Additionally, principals can also encourage teachers to engage in

professional development programs that will help teachers develop professionally. The

interviews conducted with different school principals showed that principals are encouraging

teachers to develop professionally. Principals encourage teachers to attend professional development training that the government conducts. Moreover, principals are keen to ask teachers about their needs and try to provide courses to develop them. Although the courses provided do not always translate into the pedogeological development of teachers, principals show teachers that they care about their development by offering courses based on the teachers' requests. Furthermore, school principals provide help for teachers who are enrolled in post graduate studies. Although the ministry of education does not give any privilege for teachers who are enrolled in post graduate studies, the principals try to adjust the teachers' schedules to help them attend their post graduate classes.

Maintaining High Visibility

School principals must find time to wander in the school and enter classes. Principals who are visible inside classes are more able to interact with students and teachers (Hallinger, 2010). Increased interaction between the principal and the students and the teachers have positive effects on students' behaviour and classroom interaction (Hallinger, 2015). Although each of the interviewed principals has their own way of increasing their interaction with students and teachers, they are all keen to always be visible in the school. All principals claimed that it is essential to attend the morning salute. Besides morning salute, the principal wanders in the school to stay connected with teachers and students. One of the principals interviewed claimed that she has an announced open-door policy for teachers and students. Another principal indicated that she participates in the fun days and played with teachers and students. Other principals walk in the corridors to maintain high visibility. Everyone has a way to maintain a close relationship with teachers and students. However, all principals interviewed agreed that

they should not attend classes for more than five minutes. They claimed that teachers feel

uncomfortable as they attend classes, so they try to avoid attending classes.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

It can be inferred from the findings and discussion sections that school principals interviewed are not instructional leaders. The preparation process for the position of school principals neither prepares them for instructional leadership nor expect them to act as instructional leaders. Based on the interviews conducted with the school principals, the regulations that the Ministry of Education imposes on schools prohibit principals from being instructional leaders. School principals act as executors for the policies of the Ministry of Education. This limits their ability to act as instructional leaders.

Instructional leadership has proved effective, especially in schools with limited resources. The Egyptian education system has been suffering for a long period of time from the inadequate quality it offers. Besides, the budget deficit in the Egyptian economy forces the government to minimize its spending. Accordingly, the budget allocated for education is limited. A country seeking to enhance education quality in light of its poor economic conditions might consider preparing instructional leaders to lead the process of change.

The Ministry of Education has been spending enormous amounts of the education budget to restructure education. The reforms introduced to the pre-university education system have moved Egypt from the 42nd position in 2020 to the 39th position in 2021 (State Information Service, 2022). However, it is argued that by preparing instructional leaders, education can advance greatly. Thus, the ministry of education should start to consider preparing school principals to be instructional leaders.

To sum up, the principals of public schools interviewed have minimum experience with instructional leadership. This illustrates that being an instructional leader is not required for public school principals. The regulations imposed by the government over schools, limit principals from leading the instruction. The principals are required to perform a number of tasks that makes them clerks rather than leaders. For school principals to act as instructional leaders, they must gain more autonomy over their schools. This can happen if the Ministry of Education started to trust school principals to lead their schools with less interference from their side. For the trust to be built, the programs that prepare school principals for the position should develop. By having someone who can strongly lead instruction in every school, Egypt's education system can advance greatly.

Limitations of the Study

The limitation of this study originates from the small size of the sample. It is difficult to comprehensively understand instructional leadership practices in the country using only six school principals. Although interviewing six different principals might give a good idea about leadership practices applied in schools, six principals are an inadequate indicator of leadership styles followed by principals. Moreover, gathering the data only from school principals shows only a single perspective of the phenomena. School principals might perceive themselves as instructional leaders, while teachers and students may not have the same perception. Thus, it is important to ask teachers and students about their perception of the school principal as an instructional leader. It is also necessary to include the perspective of the Ministry of Education in the research. Focusing only on school principals for data collection might have limited the comprehensiveness and richness of the findings. Another limitation to the study is the lack of

data available on the topic in Egypt. A limited number of researchers explored the field of

instructional leadership in Egypt partly because the Egyptian government is neither providing

documents regarding leadership practices in Egypt nor publishing information about the reform

plan EDU 2.0. (Moustafa et al., 2022). The data published on educational topics or plans in

Egypt is limited. This may have prevented development of a more accurate picture regarding

instructional leadership.

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Appendix A

Evaluation of teachers by the Principal

استمارة تقويم أداء المعلم بواسطة مدير المدرسة أو الرئيس المباشر

المعلم الخاضع للتقييم

فرع الأكاديمية التابع لها	المحافظة
....	....

اسم المدرسة / أو الإدارة التعليمية للعاملين بالدواوين
....

المعلم الخاضع للتقييم (تملأ البيانات وفقا لما ورد بصحيفة المعلم الالكترونية)

الاسم / .... النوع .... أنثى ☐ ذكر ☐

الرقم القومي

المستوى الوظيفي الحالي .... التخصص .... الدرجة المقيد عليها ....

المستوى الوظيفي المطلوب الترقي إليه ....

درجة الممارسة					ممارســـــــــــات للمعلـــــم	م
٥	٤	٣	٢	١		
					يلتزم بقواعد المظهر المهني اللائق	١
					يتعامل مع زملائه بطريقة	٢
					يتواصل مع التلاميذ بشكل ملائم بما يحقق التعلم الفعال	٣
					يشارك بفاعلية في أنشطة تحسين التعليم	٤
					يلتزم بالسلوك القويم مع جميع عناصر العملية التعليمية	٥
					يشارك في حل مشكلات البيئة المحيطة ويشجع التلاميذ على ذلك	٦
					يشارك في أنشطة التنمية المهنية باستمرار	٧
					يلتزم بمواعيد الحضور والانصراف وزمن الحصص	٨
					يحرص على تطوير أدائه دائما بالتدريب المستمر والاتصال بكل ما هو مفيد	٩
					يجيد التعامل مع أولياء الأمور بطريقة مهنية مناسبة	١٠
٥٠					الإجمــــــــالي	

اسم المدير / الرئيس المباشر / .... خاتم المدرسة ..

التوقيع / ....

Appendix B

The Evaluation form for teachers

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

المملكة العربية السعودية
تحت إشراف وزارة التربية والتعليم
الإدارة العامة للتربية والتعليم

مدرسة

بطاقة متابعة وتقويم الأداء الوظيفي للمعلمين

أولاً : معلومات شخصية

تاريخ المباشرة	الصف والفصل	عدد الحصص	مادة التدريس	التخصص	المؤهل وتاريخه	الجنسية	اسم المعلم رباعيا

ثانيا : الأداء الوظيفي :

موالمن التميز

....
....
....
....
....
....

الدرجة المستحقة	الحد الأعلى	العنصـــــر
	٦	الالتزام باستخدام اللغة الفصحى
	٥	الحرص على تنظيم النشاط المدرسي وتقبله وتنفيذه
	٥	الاهتمام بالنمو المعرفي
	٧	المحافظة على أوقات الدوام
	٧	الإلمام بالأسس التربوية في إعداد الدروس وتطبيقها
	٧	التمكن من المادة العلمية والقدرة على تحقيق أهدافها
	٧	الاهتمام بالتقويم المستمر ومراعاة الفروق الفردية
	٤	توزيع المنهج وملاءمة ما نفذ منه للزمن
	٤	استخدام السبورة والكتب المدرسية والوسائل التعليمية
	٥	المهارة في عرض الدروس وإدارة الفصل
	١٠	مستوى تحصيل الطلاب العلمي
	٥	التطبيقات والواجبات المدرسية والعناية بها
	٧٢	المجمـــــوع

الاحتياجات التدريبية

....
....
....
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....

ثالثا : الصفات الشخصية

	٤	السلوك العام (القدوة الحسنة)
	٤	تقدير المسؤولية
	٤	تقبل التوجيهات
	٤	حسن التصرف
	١٦	المجمـــــوع

رابعا : العلاقات مع :

التوجيهات

....
....
....
....
....

	٤	الرؤساء
	٤	الزملاء
	٤	الطلاب وأولياء الأمور
	١٢	المجمـــــوع

الدرجة المستحقة	من - إلى	التقدير	الدرجة المستحقة	من - إلى	التقدير	الدرجة المستحقة	من - إلى	التقدير	الدرجة المستحقة	من - إلى	التقدير	الدرجة المستحقة	من - إلى	التقدير
	٥٩ فأقل	غير مرضي		٦٠ - ٦٩	مرضي		٧٠ - ٧٩	جيد		٨٠ - ٨٩	جيد جدا		٤٠ ١٠٠	ممتاز

المشرف التربوي : ....

مدير المدرسة : .... توقيعه : .... التاريخ :   /   / ١٤٢ هـ

اسم المعلم : .... توقيعه : .... التاريخ :   /   / ١٤٢ هـ

توقيعه : .... التاريخ :   /   / ١٤٢ هـ

Appendix C

Evaluation of teachers by the subject supervisor

استمارة تقويم أداء المعلم بواسطة الموجه الفني

البيانات الأساسية:

المحافظة : القربية فرع الأكاديمية التابع له : القاهرة :3 ث كلية التربية ملف مدرسة الشري – منثبة البكري .

اسم المدرسة أو الإدارة التعليمية للعاملين بالدواوين :

المعلم الخاضع للتقويم (تملأ البيانات وفقا لما ورد بصحيفة أحوال المعلم الالكترونية)

الاسم :   النوع أنثى   □   ☑   □

الرقم القومي : | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

المستوى الوظيفي الحالي.   التخصص :   المرحلة المفيد عليها :

المستوى الوظيفي المطلوب الترقي إليه :

درجة الممارسة					ممارسات المعلم	
5	4	3	2	1		
					التخطيط التعليمي	
					يخطط توحدات المنهج والدروس في ضوء الأهداف العامة طويلة المدى.	1
					يصوغ أهداف تعليمية محددة وقابلة للقياس .	2
					يصمم أنشطة متنوعة لتحديد الاحتياجات التعليمية لمختلف التلاميذ.	3
					يراعي ما لدى التلاميذ من معارف وخبرات سابقة في تخطيط الدروس .	4
					يصمم أساليب مختلفة ومناسبة لتقويم أداء التلاميذ .	5
					الأداء التدريسي	
					يدير وقت التدريس الصفي لإدارة فعالة	6
					يظهر علميا امتلاكه مهارات الإدارة الصفية الفعالة .	7
					يؤكد على ضمان مشاركة الطلاب في أنشطة التعلم بغض النظر عما بينهم من فروق من حيث النوع ومستوى التحصيل الدراسي والاحتياجات الخاصة وغير ذلك .	8
					يشرك الطلاب في تصميم وإدارة بيئة التعلم ويشجعهم على ذلك.	9
					يستخدم الموارد التعليمية المختلفة استخداما فعالا في شرح المفاهيم والمهارات المتطلقة بالمحتوى التعليمي .	10
					يوظف معطيات تكنولوجيا التعليم في زيادة فرص الاكتشاف ومعالجة المعلومات والتعلم بالممارسة	11
					يستخدم أسئلة كاشفة (معمقة) وأسئلة مفتوحة (غير مقيدة الإجابة) إلى الطلاب تشجيعهم على التفكير.	12

Appendix D

Evaluation Form of the school principal

Appendix E

Semi-Structured Interview

Interview Protocol

Dimension 1: Defining the school mission

1. **Can you please explain the process of developing goals for your school?**

   Probing question 1: Who are generally involved in developing goals?

   Probing question 2: What are the roles and responsibilities of people involved in developing goals?

   Probing question 3: What role(s) do you take in developing school goals?

2. **Can you explain how goals are communicated with the school community school?**

3. **Please explain your role in sharing the goals with the school community**

Dimension 2: Managing the instructional program

1. **Could you please tell me how you coordinate and monitor the curriculum at your school?**

   Probing question: Can you please explain your experience in creating greater interaction among teachers within and across grade levels on instructional and/or curricular issues?

2. **Can you please clarify how you supervise and evaluate teachers?**

   Probing question 1: supervision helps teachers develop professionally, what is the process of supervising teachers?

   Probing question 2: What are the professional development programs offered at your school?

   Probing question 3: How do you allocate teachers in different professional development programs?

   Probing question 3: evaluation is essential to guarantee the quality of teachers in school, how do you evaluate your teachers?

Probing question 4: do you have the authority to decide on the promotion or dismissal of a teacher based on the evaluation report?

3. **Please explain how you monitor students' progress.**

Probing question 1: What is your role in monitoring students' progress?

Probing question 2: How do you keep track of the progress of every student in your school?

Dimension 3: Developing the school learning climate

1. **Teachers may sometimes be interrupted by announcements, tardy students, and requests from the office. How do you ensure that classroom learning time is uninterrupted?**
2. **What are the tools you use to motivate teachers?**

Probing question 1: motivation encourages teachers to develop themselves and do a better job. How you make sure that teachers are motivated?

Probing question 2: How do you best use the formal and informal ways of motivating teachers?

3. **How do you incentivize students to do better in their classes?**

Probing question 1: what do you do to honor high-achieving students?

Probing question 2: how do you praise students who are dedicated and making progress?

4. **Could you please explain how you promote professional development in your school?**

Probing question 1: How do you support teachers in their effort to improve teaching and learning?

Probing question 2: How do you encourage staff development in your school?

5. **How often do you maintain high visibility in your school?**

Probing question 1: while a significant portion of your time is out of your hand, interacting with teachers and students make them feel prioritized, how do you organize your time to maintain high visibility in your school?

Appendix F

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
الجــامــعة الأمـريكيـة بالقـاهــرة

Proof of IRB Approval or Waiver for Completed Graduate Thesis
        To be submitted with completed thesis and other forms requested below
All research involving living human beings or bodily tissue samples requires advance
approval from AUC's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Each student's thesis advisor
is responsible for ensuring that this form is filled in accurately. Until this form is
completed and approved, the thesis cannot be posted on DAR, and the student is not
eligible to graduate. *Please attach to this form, a copy of the IRB approval letter, the
abstract of the student's thesis and thesis copyright and availability form.*

Student Name: Jaida Mokbel Aly	**Email:** jaidaaly@aucegypt.edu
AUC ID # 900091019	**Mobile #** 1125114123

Department/Unit: Department of Educational Studies
School: School of Humanities and Social Sciences
**Thesis Title: A Qualitative Study of Instructional Leadership Practices in Egyptian
Public Schools**
Date: April 28, 2023
Name of Thesis Advisor: Dr. Mustafa Toprak
Thesis Advisor's Email: mustafa.toprak@aucegypt.edu

The advisor should check one of the following boxes.

_x__   IRB approval has already been obtained for this thesis. (Please attach a copy
           of the IRB approval letter.)

___   IRB approval is not necessary for this thesis, since the research is <u>not</u>
           <u>concerned</u> with living human beings or bodily tissue samples.

Jaida Aly
Signature of Student: Jaida Aly (May 13, 2023 20:46 GMT+3)

                                                              Date:

Mustafa Toprak
Signature of Thesis Advisor: Mustafa Toprak (May 14, 2023 11:02 GMT+3)

                                                              Date:

Name and Signature of School Dean:

_____

                                                              Date:

<u>Step 1:</u> **Student to Department or Program which needs to submit to the Dean of the
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 (1) <u>The Proof of IRB Approval /Waiver</u> together with a (2) <u>copy of the IRB approval letter</u>
      from IRB chair (3) <u>thesis abstract</u> and (4) <u>the thesis copyright and availability form</u>

<u>Step 2:</u> **The Office of the Dean of the School needs to submit to the library:**
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