



SELINUS UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

**Exploring Instructional Leadership Impact on
Principals' Effectiveness and Students' Achievement
at the Primary Level within a Region in Jamaica's
Education System**

by Cassandra Grant Barrows

A DISSERTATION

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Education
program at Selinus University

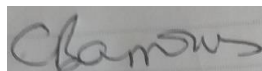
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in Education

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Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work.

It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements to award the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education at Selinus University. I have no knowledge of a similar paper submitted before, in any other academic institution.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to read 'C Grant Barrows'.

Cassandra Grant Barrows

Acknowledgement

I would to acknowledge the support and encouragement of my children, Christina, Adrian and Velicia. Thank you to the rest of my family and colleagues who encouraged me and also was a part of this study.

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I dedicate this achievement to my mother, Theresa.

Abstract

The National Educational Inspectorate (NEI), the agency within the Ministry of Education and Youth mandated to evaluate the effectiveness of schools, reported that of the 653 schools inspected during the period 2015-2019, 30% were rated as ineffective. 554 of the 653 schools inspected were primary schools. The NEI used eight key performance indicators (KPI) to determine the overall effectiveness of schools, namely Leadership and Management, Teaching Support of Students' Learning, Students' Academic Performance, Students' Academic Progress, Students' Personal and Social Development, Quality and Use of Human and Material Resources, Curriculum and Enhancement Programmes and Students' Safety, Security, Health and wellbeing (NEI 2015). For the schools rated as ineffective, the areas with the lowest ratings are Leadership and Management, Teaching in Support of Students' Learning, Students' Academic Performance, and Students' Academic Progress. Even for those schools rated as effective, one or more of these three KPIs are normally rated as unsatisfactory.

The report of the Jamaica Education Transformation Commission (JETC) stated that most students at the primary level are barely literate. According to the Patterson Report (2021), the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) 2019 examinations revealed that 33 percent of students cannot read or can barely do so; 56 percent of students cannot write or can barely do so; and 58 percent of students cannot, or can barely, find information on a topic. Hence, this research explored instructional leadership's impact on principals' effectiveness and students' achievement at the primary level within a region in Jamaica's education system. Specifically, it examines the impact of instructional leadership on principals' capacity to lead, its correlation with student outcomes, and the challenges faced in implementing effective leadership practices. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this research includes documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews, and survey data, culminating in strategic recommendations to improve instructional leadership in Jamaican primary schools.

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Abbreviations

- **CIT:** Curriculum Implementation Team
- **EPTP:** Effective Principals' Training Programme
- **ESTP:** Education System Transformation Programme
- **HME:** Honourable Minister of Education
- **JETC:** Jamaica Education Transformation Commission
- **JTC:** Jamaica Teaching Council
- **IL:** Instructional Leadership
- **KPI:** Key Performance Indicators
- **MoEY:** Ministry of Education and Youth
- **NCEL:** National College for Educational Leadership
- **NEI:** National Education Inspectorate
- **NQAA:** National Quality Assurance Authority
- **NSC:** National Standards Curriculum
- **PD:** Professional Development
- **PEP:** Primary Exit Profile
- **SDGs:** Sustainable Development Goals
- **SIP:** School Improvement Plan
- **SMT:** Senior Management Team
- **TREND:** Transforming Education for National Development
- **UN:** United Nation

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

Primary education is a crucial stage in the educational development of children, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and personal development. Primary education in Jamaica typically covers grades 1 to 6, catering to children ages 6 to 12. The Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY) oversees the administration and curriculum of primary schools, ensuring alignment with national educational standards. The Jamaican primary school curriculum includes core subjects such as Mathematics, English Language, Science, Social Studies, and Integrated Studies. It emphasizes literacy and numeracy as fundamental skills. A combination of continuous assessment and national standardized tests, the Primary Exit Profile (PEP), is used to determine students' performance at the primary level. The Jamaican government has implemented several initiatives to improve primary education. These reforms focus on enhancing educational quality, increasing access, and addressing systemic issues (MoEY, 2018).

As educational systems evolve to meet the diverse needs of learners in an ever-changing global landscape, instructional leadership emerges as a critical determinant of school success. At the heart of instructional leadership lies the pivotal role of principals, who serve as critical orchestrators of teaching and learning within educational institutions. There are two general concepts of instructional leadership (Sheppard, 1996). Instructional leadership, narrowly defined as classroom observation, was used in the 1980s and generally applied within small urban elementary schools (Hallinger, 2003; Meyer & Macmillan, 2001). However, instructional leadership has been expanded to include all leadership activities that directly or indirectly impact student performance, such as school culture, health and safety programs, timetabling procedures, and social development programs. Instructional and educational leadership are interconnected aspects of school leadership that work together to foster school improvement and student success. They are both essential for creating a school environment where all students have the opportunity to succeed academically and socially.

Educational leadership is a social process in which one person in an educational organization influences the organization's goals, vision, work, individual performances, and relations (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). It involves developing a vision, providing direction, and supporting teachers, staff, students, and learning communities (Wilson, 2024). Principals, in their roles as educational leaders, should be able to communicate and operationalize the vision of the schools they lead so that the various stakeholder groups will have a clear understanding of the direction and goals of the educational institution. Effective communication of the school's vision helps to align efforts and resources toward common objectives, fostering a sense of unity and purpose among all involved. Operationalizing the vision involves translating it into actionable plans, policies, and practices that guide daily activities and decision-making throughout the school. Operationalizing the vision also ensures that the vision is not just an abstract concept but a living, breathing aspect of the school's culture and ethos.

Background

School reform efforts have increasingly recognized the principal as a pivotal figure in transforming educational institutions and guiding faculty, staff, students, and the community toward excellence (Brown & Irby, 2001). As instructional leaders, principals bear the responsibility for fostering educational excellence. In response to global and national pressures for higher educational standards, governance and accountability have emerged as critical priorities for school leaders. The Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY) has launched a program called “Transforming Education for National Development (TREND),” aimed at positioning Jamaica as a more globally competitive nation. Governance and Accountability serve as the foundational pillar of this transformation initiative, underscoring the MoEY's acknowledgment of the vital role of school leadership. By establishing effective educational systems and appointing capable leaders, Jamaica aims to achieve improved outcomes, optimize resource allocation, and enhance strategic focus. The third pillar of the transformation program, Teaching, Curriculum, and Teacher Training, emphasizes empowering educators to design transformative learning experiences that positively impact both national and global contexts. While several scholars have explored the concept of instructional leadership, it is only recently that researchers have begun to investigate its implications within developing cultures (Hallinger et al., 2015).

In acknowledgment of the necessity to equip students for the challenges of global citizenship, the Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY) in Jamaica has implemented a curriculum rooted in the principles of constructivist theory within the education system known as the National Standard Curriculum (NSC). Constructivism has roots in epistemology, a theory of knowledge concerned with the logical categories of knowledge and its justification. Constructivism recognizes that the learner has prior knowledge and experiences, which are often determined by their social and cultural environment. The Constructivist theory's primary assumption is that learning is an active process where knowledge is constructed on existing knowledge and experience (Green & McNair, 2014). Its guiding principles suggest that learners construct their vision of the world based on their own experiences. The teacher acts as a facilitator of the learning process. Therefore, lessons are student-centered, and teachers should create a dynamic learning environment where students collaborate and construct knowledge by exploring and producing individual knowledge concepts. The National Standards Curriculum (NSC), utilized for instruction for grades one to grade nine, encapsulates three key aims that serve as the foundation for all learning within the curriculum: fostering successful lifelong learners, nurturing confident and productive individuals, and cultivating a strong sense of Jamaican identity and citizenship (NSC Framework, 2014). In understanding the pivotal role of instructional leadership in shaping principals' effectiveness and students' academic achievements, it is imperative to examine how implementing such a curriculum influences leadership practices and educational outcomes.

The Jamaican education system operates under the oversight of the Minister of Education, who is supported by a team of personnel. The Ministry of Education stands as one of Jamaica's largest public entities in terms of employment and the extent of services rendered. It encompasses eleven agencies, seven regional offices, and a central office comprising approximately 40 units organized into 5 divisions. This cohesive structure supports the functioning of over 1,000 public educational institutions, catering to approximately 580,000 students and employing over 25,000 teachers (Patterson, 2021). In 2021, the Jamaica Education Transformation Commission (JETC) conducted a comprehensive review of the Jamaican public education system and reported that although the great majority of Jamaican children have access to primary and secondary schooling, Jamaica has a severe learning crisis in that a majority of students at the end of primary school remain illiterate and innumerate.

Most leave secondary school with no marketable skills. The National Literacy Strategy aims to ensure that all students achieve a minimum proficiency in reading and writing by grade 4. The Numeracy Strategy focuses on improving students' mathematical skills through targeted interventions and teacher training. In 2018, 82.8% of students achieved “mastery” of their Grade 4 literacy test and 65.6% in their test of numeracy (Ministry of Education Statistics).

In 2015, the National Education Inspectorate (NEI), the agency that evaluates the performance of schools, rated 55% of schools as ineffective, with 45% of school leaders judged as unsatisfactory. Additionally, approximately half of the lessons observed were rated as unsatisfactory, which suggests an urgent need to ensure the requisite link between pedagogical practices and the national curriculum. Effective schools were defined by having strong leadership, a clear school mission, quality teaching and learning, a safe and orderly climate, transparent and effective monitoring of students' progress, and high expectations and parental involvement (NEI Report, 2014). Research indicated that the national literacy and numeracy strategies have improved literacy and numeracy rates among primary school students (Bailey, 2019). The launch of TREND, designed to revolutionize Jamaica's education system, in 2023 aims to achieve approximately ninety percent of students rated as proficient in all core subjects at the primary level by 2031.

Instructional leadership is crucial in achieving this national goal at the primary level of Jamaica's education system. Therefore, this dissertation explores instructional leadership's impact on school principals' effectiveness and students' achievement at the primary level within a region in Jamaica's education system. By delving into this multifaceted relationship, this study aims to uncover how instructional leadership practices influence the efficacy of school principals and students' academic outcomes. The study aims to offer actionable recommendations for educational policymakers. The findings will also inform the practices of school administrators and practitioners to enhance instructional leadership practices and foster improved student outcomes.

Problem Statement

In 2015, Jamaica and 192 other member states of the United Nations (UN) committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Integral to this commitment is Vision 2030 Jamaica, founded on four strategic goals for national development, which are further delineated into 15 National Outcomes. These outcomes embody the envisioned changes in development conditions necessary for realizing our national goals and overarching vision. Notably, National Goal 1 emphasizes empowering Jamaicans to reach their full potential, with specific outcomes including fostering a healthy and stable population, providing world-class education and training, ensuring adequate social protection, and nurturing an authentic and transformative culture. Achieving the outcome of world-class education and training necessitates our schools' provision of exceptional educational opportunities to students. (Vision 2030 Jamaica)

According to the JETC Report (2021), the 2019 Primary Exit Profile (PEP) examinations revealed that 33 percent of students cannot read or can barely do so; 56 percent of students cannot write or can barely do so; and 58 percent of students cannot, or can barely, find information on a topic. These numbers produced by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) are a stark reminder of the work ahead to meet UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially target 4.6, to ensure that all youth and most adults achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030 (UNESCO, Institute for Statistics, 2018). Several studies have explored the impact of principal leadership on student outcomes globally (e.g., Aburizaizah et al., 2019; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Sebastian et al., 2017; Zheng et al., 2017).

Previous research on instructional leadership's influence on student achievement indicates a positive association between instructional leadership and academic success (Dutta & Sahney, 2021). Another study found that principal instructional leadership significantly correlates with student achievement through the mediation of teacher instructional leadership and teacher self-efficacy (Liu et al., 2022). Within Jamaica's education system, a need exists to understand the dynamics between instructional leadership, principal effectiveness, and student achievement at the primary level.

Despite the recognized importance of instructional leadership in shaping educational outcomes, there is a gap in research regarding its specific impact within the Jamaican context. This study aims to address this gap by exploring how instructional leadership practices of primary school principals influence their effectiveness and subsequently impact student achievement in primary schools in Jamaica. By examining these relationships, this research seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform policies and practices to enhance educational leadership and improve student outcomes in Jamaica's primary education sector.

Research Questions

Exploring instructional leadership impact on principals' effectiveness and students' achievement at the primal level within a region of Jamaica's education system. The research sought answers to the following questions.

1. How does instructional leadership, as perceived by primary school principals in Jamaica, influence their effectiveness in fostering teacher development and instructional practices?
2. To what extent do instructional leadership practices of primary school principals in Jamaica correlate with student academic achievement?
3. What are the perceived challenges that primary school principals encounter in implementing effective instructional leadership practices in Jamaica?

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of instructional leadership on the effectiveness of primary school principals and students' academic achievement within the unique context of Jamaica's education system. By investigating the specific instructional leadership practices employed by principals in Jamaican primary schools, this research aims to uncover strategies that contribute to improved teaching and learning outcomes. Through rigorous analysis and exploration, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of how instructional leadership impacts principal effectiveness and student achievement in Jamaican education. By identifying effective leadership practices and their effects on academic outcomes, this research aims to provide valuable insights for educational policymakers, school leaders, and stakeholders to inform evidence-based strategies and interventions to enhance educational quality and foster positive student outcomes in Jamaica's primary schools.

Significance of study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the enhancement of educational practices and policies within the Jamaican context. By investigating the impact of instructional leadership on both principal effectiveness and student achievement, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of school leadership and its implications for academic outcomes. Understanding how instructional leadership practices influence principals' effectiveness can inform targeted professional development initiatives for school leaders, ultimately improving their ability to foster positive learning environments and support teacher development.

Moreover, by examining the relationship between instructional leadership and student achievement, this study addresses a critical aspect of educational quality within Jamaican primary schools. Identifying effective instructional leadership practices that positively impact student outcomes can guide efforts to enhance teaching and learning strategies, curriculum development, and overall school improvement initiatives. This research has the potential to inform evidence-based policies and interventions aimed at raising academic standards and narrowing achievement gaps in the Jamaican education system.

Definition of terms

1. **Instructional Leadership:** refers to those sets of leadership practices that involve planning, evaluating, coordinating, and improving teaching and learning. (Hallinger 2003)
2. **Instructional Leader:** defined as the principal of the school, focusing on instruction. Glanz (2005) stated that the role of the instructional leader is vital to improving teaching and learning as the leader should involve teachers in instructional conversations and meaningful observations.
3. **Instructional strategies:** techniques teachers use to help students become independent, strategic learners. (Alberta Learning, Canada 2002)
4. **Instructional leadership practices:** refer to the actions and strategies employed by educational leaders, such as principals and administrators, to promote and enhance teaching and learning within a school.

5. **Primary Exit Profile (PEP):** exit examination at the primary level (ages 10-12) that allows students to transition to secondary education (MoEY)
6. **Student achievement:** refers to the measurable performance of students in various academic areas. It often encompasses their ability to attain and demonstrate knowledge and skills through standardized tests, classroom assessments, and other evaluative methods. Achievement is typically assessed in core subjects such as mathematics, science, reading, and writing but can also include other academic disciplines and extracurricular activities.
7. **Educational Leadership:** the exercise of developing a vision, providing direction, and offering support to teachers, staff, students, and learning communities (Wilson, 2024)

Conclusion

Chapter 1 introduced the study and provided the background necessary to explore the impact of instructional leadership on principals' effectiveness and students' achievement. The research questions were clearly articulated to guide the investigation. The purpose and significance of the study were outlined, highlighting the aim of the research and how its findings will contribute to the understanding and practice of instructional leadership in primary schools in Jamaica. Additionally, key terms and abbreviations were defined and outlined to ensure clarity for the readers.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher sought to gather the views of scholars who have documented studies on Instructional leadership. The literature review consists of four major sections. In the first section, I reviewed the concept and relevance of instructional leadership. In the second section, I reviewed principals' effectiveness. In the third section, I examined students' achievement. In the fourth section, I reviewed the barriers to instructional leadership contextualized in Jamaica.

Concept and Relevance of Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership can be defined as intentional actions and processes to guide and support instructional planning, instructional delivery, and results analysis. Instructional leadership is an area in which many school leaders seek insight and practical ways to improve their skills (Cagle, 2023). Instructional leadership can be understood as a leadership practice that promotes effective teaching and learning while providing guidance and direction for instructional improvement. It involves a strong emphasis on learning, establishing teaching and learning objectives, maintaining high expectations for students, creating and supporting student learning goals, monitoring student progress, safeguarding instructional time, coordinating the curriculum, offering instructional support, and facilitating teacher development.

Instructional leadership is crucial for schools because it offers a framework to evaluate current leadership approaches and practices. It also informs potential changes in direction, allowing leadership practices to be introduced or further developed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning within the school (The Education Hub, 2021; Le Fevre, 2021). According to Hallinger and Murphy (1985), the core elements of instructional leadership include defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and fostering a positive school climate (Mapaire, 2019). Leaders set clear educational goals and ensure that all school activities align with these objectives. Effective instructional leaders actively oversee curriculum and instruction. They create a supportive environment that promotes collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement among teachers (Hallinger, 2005).

The impact of instructional leadership stems from establishing processes, tools, and a learning culture that enables effective teaching. Changing demands and new imperatives have propelled school leadership as a policy priority for governments worldwide. Increasingly, countries are seeking to align their education systems to the needs of the modern world, so school leaders' expectations have changed profoundly. Effective school leadership now requires competencies such as setting a vision and strategizing, leading change initiatives, engaging in systems thinking, demonstrating a sense of service and community, working collaboratively in teams, and displaying ethics and integrity (Walker, 2021). There is a need for school leaders who can offer adaptive and creative solutions to contemporary challenges and have the ability to transform their schools into visionary institutions (NCEL 2021).

The Ministry of Education and Youth placed a high priority on developing leadership in education and on bringing greater accountability to the system, given its awareness of leadership development as not only an individual but also an institutional responsibility. The ministry's efforts have been evidenced in the recommendations made by the National Task Force on Educational Reform Jamaica, 2004. The report outlined a new model of governance in which governance and accountability at the regional and school levels would be strengthened through the training and certification of all school managers. The report stated that to be successful, schools needed a strong and effective board, a responsive principal displaying strong leadership, responsibility for the management of the teaching profession by principals, vice-principals, and heads of department, and an articulated, shared vision of success around which stakeholders align strategic planning and monitoring to achieve the vision. The National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL) was a direct response to the recommendations outlined and was established in 2011 under the Education System Transformation Programme (ESTP) and given the responsibility to develop excellent leadership in the island's public schools and supporting institutions.

Instructional Leadership Framework 2.0

Instructional leadership is learning-focused, strength-based, and measured by improvement in instructional practice and in the quality of student learning. The Instructional Leadership Framework 2.0 emphasizes the critical role of school leaders in enhancing teaching and learning. It typically includes four key dimensions that guide principals and other instructional leaders in creating effective educational environments. While the specific terminology and details can vary depending on the source, the following are commonly recognized dimensions of instructional leadership: developing mission and goals, managing the education production function, Promoting an academic learning climate, and developing a supportive work environment.

Developing goals and mission as an instructional leadership dimension involves establishing a clear and inspiring vision for the school, accompanied by specific, actionable goals that guide the efforts of all stakeholders. According to Robinson et al. (2009), effective school leadership is crucial for improving student outcomes, and it starts with setting a compelling vision that aligns with the broader educational goals. This vision serves as a foundation for developing detailed, measurable objectives that provide direction and focus for teachers, students, and the broader school community. The goals should be collaboratively developed, ensuring that all stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and community members, are engaged in the process. This collaborative approach not only fosters a sense of ownership and commitment but also enhances the implementation and sustainability of the goals (Fullan, 2005). By clearly defining and communicating these goals, instructional leaders can create a unified effort towards enhancing educational practices and achieving desired student outcomes (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

Monitoring and evaluating progress towards these goals is crucial for continuous improvement and accountability. Instructional leaders use data and evidence to track progress, make informed adjustments, and maintain focus and momentum. Regular internal and external communication ensures that all stakeholders understand their roles in achieving the school's mission. Building a culture of shared responsibility and celebrating successes further enhances commitment and motivation. By integrating these goals into daily practices and aligning policies, curricula, and

instructional strategies, leaders create a coherent and focused educational environment that drives student learning and overall school success.

Managing the education production function within the context of the Instructional Dimension Framework 2.0 involves a comprehensive approach to optimizing the inputs, processes, and outputs of educational systems to enhance student learning outcomes. This framework emphasizes the critical role of instructional leadership in orchestrating the various elements that contribute to effective teaching and learning. Leaders must ensure that resources such as qualified teachers, appropriate curricula, and supportive learning environments are effectively aligned and utilized to maximize educational productivity (Odden & Picus, 2014). Instructional leaders are tasked with fostering professional development, implementing evidence-based instructional strategies, and continuously monitoring and assessing both teaching practices and student performance to ensure that educational goals are being met (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). By focusing on the intricate dynamics of the education production function, leaders can create a cohesive and efficient educational system that drives significant improvements in student achievement (Hallinger, 2003).

Student learning is prioritized and sustained in an environment where academic expectations are high. Promoting an academic learning climate within the context of Instructional Leadership Dimension 2.0 involves creating such an environment and facilitating effective teaching. Instructional leaders play a pivotal role in fostering this climate by setting clear academic goals, providing ongoing professional development for teachers, and encouraging collaborative practices among staff (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). They must ensure that instructional practices are aligned with evidence-based strategies that promote student engagement and achievement (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Additionally, leaders need to cultivate a supportive atmosphere where students feel safe, valued, and motivated to learn, which can significantly impact their academic performance and overall school experience (Hallinger, 2011). By focusing on these elements, instructional leaders can create a positive and academically rigorous environment that enhances the educational outcomes for all students (Day, Sammons, & Gunter, 2016). It is crucial that the environment not only focuses on high academic outcomes but is also one that is supportive.

Developing a supportive work environment entails creating a school culture where teachers feel valued, empowered, and motivated to engage in continuous improvement. Instructional leaders achieve this by fostering open communication, providing meaningful professional development opportunities, and encouraging collaborative practices among staff (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). They must establish trust and collegiality, ensuring that teachers have the resources and support needed to implement effective instructional strategies (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). By promoting a culture of shared leadership, leaders enable teachers to take on leadership roles and contribute to school-wide decision-making processes, thereby enhancing their commitment and professional growth (Day, Sammons, & Gunter, 2016). Additionally, leaders must address the well-being of their staff, recognizing and mitigating factors that contribute to stress and burnout, to maintain a positive and productive working environment (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). This supportive atmosphere not only benefits teachers but also translates into improved student outcomes as teachers are more likely to be engaged and effective in their instructional roles.

The Instructional Leadership Framework 2.0 offers a comprehensive and adaptive approach to enhancing educational outcomes. By having a clear vision, emphasizing data-driven decision-making, fostering collaborative environments, and focusing on continuous professional development, the framework aligns with modern educational demands and challenges. Its flexible nature allows it to be tailored to diverse school contexts, ensuring that all students receive high-quality instruction. As educators and administrators continue to refine and implement these practices, the framework's emphasis on innovation and equity will be crucial in achieving sustained academic success and preparing students for the complexities of the future.

Principals' Effectiveness

The role of the principal has evolved from a focus on administrative tasks and discipline to a multifaceted leadership position that includes instructional leadership. This evolution reflects broader educational trends and societal changes, underscoring the increasing complexity and importance of the principal's role in shaping educational outcomes. The principal's role is pivotal in shaping a school culture that prioritizes student achievement and professional growth.

Principals serve as instructional leaders by setting clear academic goals, supporting effective teaching practices, and fostering an environment conducive to continuous learning and collaboration among staff. They act as visionaries and catalysts for change, guiding the school's efforts to implement data-driven strategies, utilize evidence-based instructional methods, and ensure equity in educational opportunities. By actively engaging with teachers, students, and the community, principals help to create a shared commitment to excellence and innovation in education. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) posited that leadership has six major categories: instructional leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, contingency leadership, transformational and managerial leadership. Instructional leadership is a significant practice in student outcomes, as it focuses on the teacher and the quality of instruction offered. The instructional leadership mindset includes an intense moral purpose focused on promoting deep student learning, professional inquiry, trusting relationships, and seeking evidence in action (Timperley, 2011).

Instructional leaders offer coaching and mentoring to the teachers in their schools, serving as a valuable instructional resource for their staff. In this role, principals stay updated on the latest trends in effective instruction, assessment, and curriculum. The NCEL serves the development needs of school leaders in Jamaica, from aspiring to experienced principals of primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, and has trained approximately 75 percent of the island's principals in its flagship programme, the Effective Principals' Training Programme (EPTP). The EPTP is designed to serve the developmental needs of system and school leaders by emphasizing leadership practice more than the theory and the scaffolding of leadership competencies rather than the acquisition of concepts. The core of leadership development for NCEL is about transforming attitudes, beliefs, and practices so that greater emphasis can be placed on learning, collaboration, and accountability (MoEY, 2018)

Sergiovanni (1995) proposed that leadership comprises a set of forces that the principal uses to make the school effective. These forces are technical, human, symbolic, cultural, and educational. The technical leader displays sound management techniques such as planning and time management. Planning is a critical component of effective technical leadership. It involves setting objectives, defining tasks, allocating resources, and establishing timelines. The human leader harnesses the school's human resources and motivates them. Effective leaders

provide continuous professional development opportunities, foster a collaborative environment, and offer constructive feedback. This support enhances teachers' instructional practices (Blase & Blase, 1999).

The symbolic leader emphasizes matters of importance to the school community. The school's values and vision are promoted using symbols and rituals to build a shared identity and foster a collaborative spirit with parents and other stakeholders, which can lead to increased support for school initiatives (Fullan, 2001). Building consensus around the school's vision and goals is crucial. Studies indicate that schools with strong symbolic leaders often exhibit higher levels of teacher satisfaction, student engagement, and overall academic achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Symbolic leaders foster trust, respect, and collaboration by creating a positive school climate. Through symbolic actions, principals can nurture a supportive and inclusive environment (Sergiovanni, 2007).

The cultural leader seeks to define the culture of the school, its goals, vision, and values. Cultural leadership is the practice of shaping, nurturing, and maintaining an educational institution's values, beliefs, and norms. It influences the school's ethos and climate, ensuring that the culture aligns with the school's vision and goals (Schein, 2010). The cultural leader uses various platforms and opportunities to consistently articulate the school's vision and core values, ensuring they are understood and embraced by the entire school community (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Effective cultural leaders lead by example, modelling behaviours that reflect the school's values. Their actions demonstrate commitment to the school's mission, fostering a culture of integrity and respect (Sergiovanni, 1992). Cultural leaders encourage collaboration among staff, students, and the community. They create structures and opportunities for teamwork and shared decision-making, which enhances a sense of collective responsibility and belonging (Fullan, 2011)

The educational leader shows expert knowledge about matters of education, curriculum, teaching, and learning. Managing the curriculum and ensuring its alignment with standards is a crucial aspect of instructional leadership. Leaders who are actively involved in curriculum development and implementation can better support teachers in delivering effective instruction (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Educational leaders, particularly those in instructional leadership

roles, are integral to the success of schools. By setting clear goals, managing the curriculum, promoting professional development, fostering a positive school culture, and focusing on student achievement, they create an environment where both teachers and students can thrive. The impact of effective instructional leadership is evident in improved teaching practices and enhanced student outcomes.

Principals must have diverse skills and be instructional leaders to manage the school and guide it toward excellence effectively. Strong principals must exhibit the following behaviours: display commitment to academic goals, consult effectively with others, provide forceful and dynamic leadership, create order and discipline, marshal resources, use time well, and evaluate results (McEwan, 2003). Although schools may vary in size, complexity, and location, the fundamental functions of principals remain the same. Their influence as instructional leaders will ultimately develop and lead the school to success and excellence.

Students Achievement

Instructional leadership affects student achievement both directly and indirectly. Direct effects include initiatives that target instruction and learning. Indirect effects are mediated through factors like teacher efficacy and school climate. Principals who prioritize and support high-quality instruction can positively impact education quality for student learning and achievement. Studies have found a strong relationship between principal instructional leadership and student success (Robinson et al., 2018). As instructional leaders, principals recognize that teaching, learning, and academic achievement are the main business of the school. They recognize that the students, staff, parents, and community all come together to execute this business effectively. The role of principals is to combine all these elements to ensure that the school's business is successfully carried out and maintained.

Successful school leaders make important contributions to the improvement of student learning. As instructional leaders, they must ensure that teachers are committed, students are actively engaged in learning, and parents are supportive. Effective principals engage in practices such as observing classrooms, providing feedback, and facilitating professional development, directly influencing teaching quality and student performance.

Instructional leadership's ultimate purpose is to improve student outcomes in their ability to collaborate with others, approach new situations by thinking at high levels, and solve problems by applying what they have learned. Instructional leadership should help to prepare students to be global citizens. The four C's of the 21st Century skills, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, are essential for modern students to succeed in school and the workplace. Critical thinking teaches students to question claims and seek truth. Creativity teaches students to think in a way that is unique to them. Collaboration teaches students that groups can create something bigger and better than you can on your own. Communication teaches students how to convey ideas efficiently (Educational Hub; Hummel, 2024). By integrating the 4Cs into instructional leadership, principals can create a dynamic and responsive educational environment that prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century.

The National Standard Curriculum (NSC) used to teach primary school students in Jamaica, designed for students of grades 1 to 9, mandates the incorporation of the 4Cs to foster essential 21st-century skills. This approach aligns with the growing recognition that modern education must go beyond rote learning to prepare students for a dynamic and interconnected world. Additionally, research underscores the importance of instructional leadership in enhancing student achievement. Effective instructional leaders create supportive and high-expectation environments, provide professional development for teachers, and implement data-driven strategies to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Studies, such as those by Leithwood et al. (2004) and Robinson et al. (2008), consistently demonstrate that strong instructional leadership significantly correlates with higher student performance, reinforcing the need for skilled leadership in implementing and sustaining curriculum advancements.

Barriers to Effective Instructional Leadership

Despite the recognized benefits, principals often face challenges in exercising instructional leadership. Jamaica Education Transformation Commission (JETC) Report 2021 identified limited resources and infrastructure, insufficient professional development, administrative burdens, cultural and socioeconomic factors, and policy and governance challenges as key barriers to effective school leadership. Many schools in Jamaica face significant challenges due to the lack of necessary facilities and materials to support effective teaching and learning, which poses a substantial obstacle to instructional leadership.

Adequate infrastructure, such as well-maintained classrooms, libraries, science labs, and technology resources, is critical for creating an environment conducive to learning. However, numerous Jamaican schools struggle with outdated or insufficient facilities, which can hinder the implementation of modern instructional strategies and limit students' engagement and achievement. The Jamaica Education Transformation Commission Report (2021) highlighted that the lack of basic educational resources, such as textbooks, laboratory equipment, and digital tools, significantly impedes the quality of education delivered. Instructional leaders tasked with improving teaching and learning outcomes find it challenging to foster innovation and student-centered learning in such resource-constrained settings. Leithwood et al. (2004) emphasize that effective instructional leadership involves providing the necessary resources and support to teachers and students. Therefore, addressing the deficiencies in school facilities and materials is crucial for empowering school leaders in Jamaica to drive meaningful educational improvements and enhance student performance.

The report emphasized the need for continuous professional development for school leaders. Many principals and educational leaders in Jamaica do not receive adequate training or opportunities for professional growth. This lack of development hinders their ability to stay updated with modern educational practices and leadership strategies. School leaders may struggle to implement effective instructional strategies and manage their schools without ongoing professional development. Continuous professional development is crucial for principals and other school leaders to stay updated on the latest educational research, instructional methodologies, and leadership practices. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) state that professional development helps school leaders acquire new skills, refine their leadership practices, and stay informed about innovative instructional strategies that can enhance student learning. Furthermore, ongoing training provides a platform for leaders to reflect on their practices, collaborate with peers, and receive feedback, all of which are essential for continuous improvement. Leithwood et al. (2004) emphasize that well-prepared and continuously developed leaders are better equipped to create supportive learning environments, implement data-driven decisions, and foster a culture of high expectations and accountability. Without such professional growth opportunities, school leaders may find it challenging to navigate the complexities of educational leadership, ultimately impacting the overall effectiveness of their schools.

School leaders in Jamaica often face heavy administrative workloads that divert their attention from instructional leadership, which is crucial for enhancing teaching and learning outcomes. The myriad of administrative tasks, ranging from managing budgets, handling personnel issues, and complying with bureaucratic regulations, consumes a significant portion of principals' time and energy. This administrative burden can prevent school leaders from engaging deeply with teachers and students, observing classroom practices, and providing essential instructional guidance and support. Research indicates that effective instructional leadership, characterized by direct involvement in curriculum planning, teacher development, and student assessment, is vital for improving educational outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008). However, when principals are overwhelmed by administrative responsibilities, their ability to focus on these key areas diminishes. As highlighted by Hallinger and Murphy (1986), the balance between managerial and instructional roles is critical, and excessive administrative demands can skew this balance, ultimately affecting the school's academic performance. Therefore, addressing the administrative overload is essential for Jamaican school leaders to prioritize instructional leadership and effectively drive school improvement.

Cultural and socioeconomic challenges significantly hinder effective school leadership, impacting the ability of principals to foster an environment conducive to learning and growth. In many communities, cultural norms and socioeconomic disparities can create barriers to parental involvement, student engagement, and resource allocation. For instance, schools in low-income areas may struggle with inadequate funding, limited access to educational materials, and higher rates of absenteeism and dropout. These challenges require school leaders to be not only instructional guides but also community advocates and problem solvers. According to research by Leithwood et al. (2008), effective school leaders must navigate these complex dynamics by building strong relationships with the community, advocating for resources, and implementing inclusive practices that respect and leverage cultural diversity.

Additionally, leadership practices must be adapted to meet the unique needs of students from various socioeconomic backgrounds to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities (Khalifa et al., 2016). Without addressing these cultural and socioeconomic factors, school leaders may find it difficult to implement instructional strategies that resonate with and support their entire student body, thereby limiting their overall effectiveness in driving school improvement.

Policy and governance barriers can limit the ability of school leaders to make decisions that best suit their schools' needs, leading to a lack of responsiveness and innovation (Patterson et al., 2021). When rigid policies and centralized governance structures dominate, principals often find themselves constrained by bureaucratic procedures and a lack of autonomy. This limitation can prevent them from implementing context-specific strategies that address their students' and teachers' unique challenges and opportunities. Effective instructional leadership relies on the flexibility to adapt and innovate, as supported by research from Fullan (2007) and Leithwood et al. (2008), which highlights the crucial role of principal autonomy in fostering school improvement and student success. When school leaders are empowered to make decisions, they can better support teaching and learning, create a positive school culture, and respond swiftly to emerging needs. Thus, reducing policy and governance barriers is essential for enhancing principal effectiveness and ensuring schools can achieve their full potential.

Effective instructional leadership is essential for improving teaching and learning in schools. However, the barriers to effective school leadership in Jamaica, as identified in the Patterson Report (2021) and supported by other studies, are multifaceted and complex. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving resource allocation, enhancing professional development, reducing administrative burdens, and addressing cultural and socioeconomic issues. Policy reforms and greater support from the Ministry of Education are also crucial to empower school leaders to make meaningful changes in their schools.

Conclusion of Chapter 2

The role of the principal as an educational leader has been extensively studied and remains a focus of ongoing research. Notably, the specific role of the principal as an instructional leader within the broader context of educational leadership has garnered significant attention from researchers. Instructional leadership is crucial in shaping the educational experiences of both teachers and students in primary schools. Instructional leaders can significantly enhance teaching quality and student outcomes by focusing on clear goals, supporting teacher development, and fostering a positive school climate. Continued research and professional development for school leaders are essential to overcoming challenges and maximizing the benefits of instructional leadership.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore instructional leadership impact on principals' effectiveness and students' achievement in seven primary schools within a specific region of Jamaica's education system. This chapter outlines the role of the researcher, the research design, the participants, ethical considerations, data collection methods, triangulation, validity and reliability, limitations and delimitations, the data collection matrix, and the data analysis procedures employed in the study. The researcher employed a mixed methodology approach, quantitative and qualitative research designs. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does instructional leadership, as perceived by primary school principals in Jamaica, influence their effectiveness in fostering teacher development and instructional practices?
2. To what extent do instructional leadership practices of primary school principals in Jamaica correlate with student academic achievement?
3. What are the perceived challenges that primary school principals encounter in implementing effective instructional leadership practices in Jamaica?

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in conducting the study encompasses the meticulous design and execution of the research process to ensure validity and reliability. This begins with developing clear research questions, followed by selecting an appropriate methodology. The researcher is responsible for conducting a thorough literature review to situate the study within the existing body of knowledge and identify gaps the research aims to fill. Ethical considerations are paramount, requiring the researcher to obtain informed consent from participants, protect their confidentiality, and ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. The researcher then collects data using chosen methods, maintaining consistency and rigor to uphold data quality.

In the data analysis phase, the researcher interprets quantitative data using statistical techniques to identify patterns and trends. In contrast, qualitative data is analyzed through thematic analysis and coding to uncover deeper insights. The researcher draws conclusions based on the evidence gathered, ensuring the credibility and reliability of the findings through techniques such as triangulation. The results are then compiled into a comprehensive report, clearly presenting the methodology, analysis, findings, and conclusions. The researcher will disseminate the findings through presentations and conferences, contributing to the academic community and other stakeholders.

Research Design

The mixed approach was utilized in this study. A mixed-methods research approach combines quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis within a single study. This enables researchers to draw from the strengths of both methodologies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of research problems. This approach is particularly valuable in educational research, where it can help capture the complexity of teaching and learning processes. One significant advantage of mixed methods research is its ability to contextualize quantitative findings with qualitative insights, enhancing the richness and depth of data interpretation. For instance, while quantitative data might reveal trends in principals' effectiveness, qualitative data can provide insights into principals' attitudes and experiences, offering a fuller picture of educational outcomes.

Furthermore, mixed methods research enhances the credibility of findings through triangulation. By corroborating evidence from both qualitative and quantitative sources, researchers can increase the validity of their conclusions (Scribbr, 2023). This approach effectively addresses complex research questions that cannot be fully understood through a single method alone. Mixed methods research is recognized as a "third paradigm" in social research, blending the philosophical underpinnings of both qualitative and quantitative traditions to create a distinct methodology (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2024). It is widely adopted across various fields, including education, health sciences, and social sciences, reflecting its versatility and robustness (Catalyst, 2021). By integrating quantitative and qualitative research methods, the mixed-methods approach allows for a more holistic understanding of how instructional leadership impacts principal effectiveness and student achievement.

It ensures that the findings are statistically robust and deeply grounded in the real-world experiences of those involved in primary education. The qualitative methodology used in this research was semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis, while quantitative data was obtained through surveys. This comprehensive approach aligns with best practices in educational research, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are reliable and relevant to informing policy and practice.

Participants

Participants are the individuals who take part in a study and provide data or insights relevant to the research question. A working partnership exists between the participants and the researcher. Each participant was required to provide informed consent, which, according to Creswell and Poth (2017), helps build trust between researchers and participants. The study involves participants from a representative sample of seven primary schools within one region. This careful selection ensures that the findings are generalizable and reflect broader trends within primary education. The sample comprised:

Principals:

Seven primary school principals with at least three years of experience in their role. Selecting principals with at least three years of experience ensures they have had sufficient time to implement and influence instructional leadership practices within their schools. Experienced principals are likely to provide richer insights into the effectiveness of their leadership practices and their impact on student achievement. This criterion aligns with research suggesting that principal effectiveness often increases with experience as leaders become more adept at navigating the complexities of their roles (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Teachers:

Three teachers from each of the same primary schools, totalling twenty-one, each with at least three years of teaching experience, were part of the study. Similarly, teachers with at least three years of experience are more likely to have a stable understanding of the school's instructional practices and can provide valuable feedback on the impact of the principal's leadership. Experienced teachers are typically more aware of the instructional dynamics within their classrooms and can offer nuanced perspectives on how leadership practices affect teaching and learning (Hattie, 2009). Including three teachers from each school ensures that a range of viewpoints is represented, enhancing the reliability and depth of the data collected.

This sample design is grounded in the principles of purposive sampling, which is particularly effective in educational research where specific expertise and experience are critical for addressing the research questions (Patton, 2002). By involving participants who are well-versed in their roles, the study aims to capture detailed and informed perspectives on instructional leadership practices and their impact on student outcomes. The inclusion criteria ensure that the study benefits from the insights of seasoned educators, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the instructional leadership landscape in primary schools. This approach also helps to mitigate potential biases that might arise from including less experienced participants who may not have fully developed their instructional or leadership practices.

Table 1: Demographics of the Research Participants

Participants	Highest Professional Qualification	Years of Experience in present role			Total
		3 to 5	5 to 10	>10	
Principal	Master's Degree	-	2	3	5
Principal	Bachelor's Degree	-	1	-	1
Principal	Diploma in Education	-	1	-	1
Teachers	Master's Degree	-	3	6	9
Teachers	Bachelor's Degree	5	5	-	10
Teachers	Diploma in Education	-	-	2	2
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS					28

Ethical Consideration

All educational research should be conducted with an ethic of respect for people and their rights, knowledge, the quality of educational research, the environment, and academic freedom. There should be an ethic of care for all involved in educational research by and for researchers (BERA 2024). The data protection legislation passed in 2020 transformed the way organizations manage personal data, including collection, storage, utilization, disclosure, and disposal. The researcher was guided by these acts to maintain the ethical requirements and safety of the participants in the study. Prior permission from the respondents was obtained from principals and teachers. The intention of the data collection and the aim of the research were fully explained before conducting the research (Bernard & Bernard, 2012).

As per the Data Protection Act, further care was taken to maintain the privacy of the personal information collected from the participants, which included name, gender, and other details. The Access to Information Act, 2002 was a further guide used by the researcher in accessing and interrogating the data used in this study. All participants were allowed to withdraw at any point of the research if they were uncomfortable with any part of the process.

Data Collection Methods

A comprehensive data collection process was meticulously employed to explore instructional leadership's impact on principal effectiveness and student achievement in seven primary schools in a region in Jamaica. This process involved using multiple data sources to ensure a robust, triangulated, and credible research design. The data collection tools and procedures included document analysis, surveys, and semi-structured interviews.

Documentary Analysis

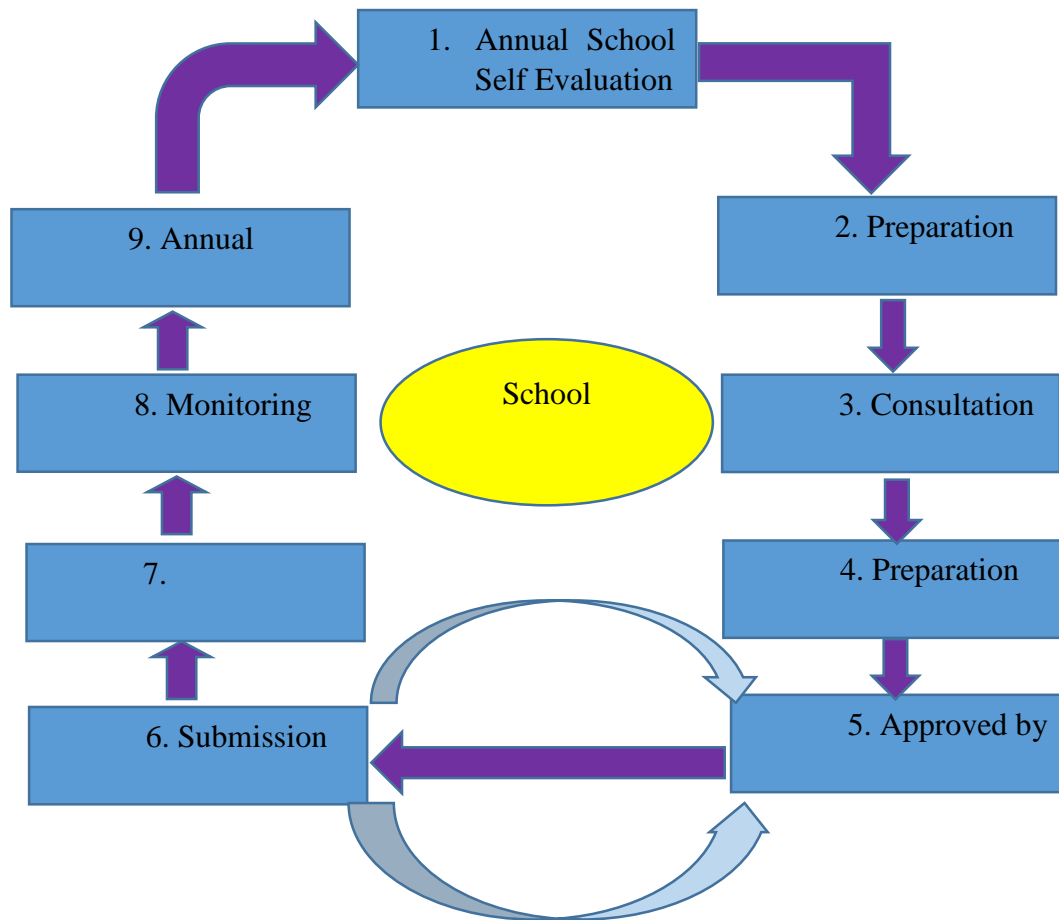
Documentary analysis is a research method that systematically examines and evaluates documents to extract and interpret data relevant to a particular study (Grant, 2022). This approach allows researchers to delve into various forms of documentation, including policy papers, administrative records, reports, meeting minutes, correspondence, and other written, visual, or digital materials. Through careful analysis, researchers can identify patterns, themes, and insights contributing to a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Documentary analysis is particularly valuable in educational research, where it can provide contextual information, historical perspectives, and evidence of policy implementation and outcomes. By triangulating data from documents with other qualitative or quantitative data sources, researchers can enhance the reliability and validity of their findings, offering a comprehensive view of the phenomena under investigation. In researching the impact of instructional leadership on principal effectiveness and student achievement in seven primary schools, the following documents were analyzed: school improvement plans, principal performance appraisals, principals' and teachers' professional development records, students' performance records, curriculum implementation records, and the schools' inspection reports.

School Improvement Plans

School improvement plans were scrutinized to assess how individual schools implement instructional leadership strategies and their goals for enhancing student performance. In 2005, the Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY), Jamaica, mandated all public schools to develop and submit school improvement plans to the regional offices for approval. School Improvement Plan (SIP) is a strategic document developed by schools to outline specific goals and actions aimed at enhancing student achievement and overall school performance. The SIP includes detailed action plans, timelines, responsibilities for staff members, and methods for monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes. The primary goal of an SIP is to create a structured pathway for schools to improve teaching and learning, foster a positive school culture, and ensure that all students have access to high-quality education.

School improvement plans guide leadership and the school community to continuously achieve and enhance the school's vision, mission, and overall effectiveness. It creates a positive learning environment that maximizes students' educational outcomes and experiences. The school improvement process involves identifying areas that need enhancement, setting goals, implementing targeted strategies, and continuously monitoring progress (Huizenga, 2024). The schools are provided with a School Improvement Planning Manual by the MoEY that gives information on preparing the school improvement plan. The school improvement planning process follows a three-year cycle. The MoEY, in its result-based management plan, presents the philosophy, strategic objectives, major priorities, and programme to be embarked upon in order to achieve its long-term commitment to producing globally competitive, socially conscious Jamaican citizens. Consistent with this trust, the school improvement plan of all public schools must be aligned with the Ministry's strategic objectives and policy priorities (SIP Manual, 2019). The collaborative and continuous process of school improvement planning should be led by a committee and comprised nine steps:

Figure 1: The school Improvement Planning Process adapted from the SIP Manual (2019)



The Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY) assigns literacy and numeracy targets to schools based on their previous performance in national examinations. In addition to the Ministry's Strategic Objective #7, which focuses on maximizing all students' performance, there are other objectives aimed at ensuring students' access to quality education, effective teaching and learning, and educational programs that meet prescribed standards of quality. School leaders are expected to create goals and targets aligned with these strategic objectives.

This approach is supported by literature indicating that developing goals and a mission is a crucial dimension of instructional leadership. It involves establishing a clear and inspiring vision for the school, accompanied by specific, actionable goals that guide the efforts of all stakeholders. The school improvement plan includes a monitoring and implementation plan that outlines the activities needed to achieve the targets and identifies the personnel responsible for completing these activities.

Completed school improvement plans are submitted to the regional office for review and are rated using a rubric developed by the MoEY. The assigned rating indicates whether the plan meets the criteria for approval by the MoEY.

Utilizing school improvement plans as a method of documentary analysis offers valuable insights into the strategic priorities, strengths, and areas for development within the schools. This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the intentions and actions taken by schools to enhance educational outcomes. Through careful analysis, the researcher identified patterns, assessed the alignment between stated goals and implemented strategies, and evaluated the effectiveness of interventions. This method also facilitates sharing best practices and lessons learned across different schools. By systematically documenting and analysing these plans, the researcher could better understand the processes contributing to school improvement and provide data-informed analysis. Ultimately, documentary analysis of school improvement plans is a powerful tool for advancing educational quality and equity.

Principal Performance Records

Principals' performance records were reviewed to assess their effectiveness in implementing instructional leadership practices within their schools. Principal performance appraisals, also known as performance evaluation or performance review, is a systematic process by which the board of governance assesses and evaluates the principal's performance and productivity. This evaluation typically involves comparing the principal's individual performance against predefined standards, goals, and competencies, as well as providing feedback. The primary objectives of performance appraisal are to identify strengths and areas for improvement, facilitate communication between employees and management, and support decisions related to promotions, compensation, training, and development.

The Jamaica Teaching Council (JTC) developed the principal appraisal instrument utilized by the Ministry of Education and Youth. The Jamaica Teaching Council (JTC) is a statutory body established to regulate the teaching profession in Jamaica. Its primary function is to ensure the quality and professionalism of teachers by setting standards for teacher education, certification, and practice. The JTC is responsible for the registration and licensing of teachers, establishing a code of ethics, and promoting continuous professional development.

Additionally, it plays a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating the performance of educators to maintain high standards in the Jamaican education system.

Professional Development Records

Professional development records for principals and teachers were reviewed to determine the extent and focus of training programmes related to instructional leadership. Professional development (PD) serves as a crucial documentary analysis data collection tool. These records provide rich qualitative and quantitative data that reveal how principals and teachers engage in learning activities designed to enhance their instructional skills and leadership capacities. These documents include training program agendas and evaluation forms, which together offer a comprehensive view of the professional growth opportunities provided within the schools. By analyzing these documents, the researcher could assess the types and frequency of PD activities, the content areas emphasized, and the participants' engagement levels, thus gaining insights into how these activities align with the school's improvement plans and instructional goals.

Moreover, professional development documentation can highlight the relationship between PD efforts and the resulting changes in instructional practices and student outcomes. For instance, by examining post-PD implementation reports and teacher reflections, the researcher could trace the impact of specific training sessions on curriculum implementation, classroom instruction, and management. In the context of instructional leadership, this analysis can also shed light on how principals support and lead PD initiatives and how their leadership styles influence the professional growth of their staff. In the seven Jamaican primary schools, this focus on PD documentation provides a critical lens to understand the strategies employed to improve teaching quality and student performance. By correlating PD data with metrics of principal effectiveness and student achievement, the researchers can draw conclusions about the efficacy of leadership-driven professional development in fostering educational success.

Student Performance Records

In the research exploring the impact of instructional leadership on principals' effectiveness and students' achievements in seven primary schools in Jamaica, students' academic records serve as a critical component of documentary analysis. This form of data collection involves the systematic examination of official documents, such as report cards, standardized test scores, and other internal academic performance records. Robinson et al. (2008) stated that instructional leadership is three to four times more impactful on students' performance than transformational leadership. Numerous researchers have noted the significant impact of school leadership on student learning and achievement. For instance, Leithwood et al. (2004) opined that among all the contributing factors that influence students' learning, leadership is second to classroom instruction. Student performance data provide objective and quantifiable evidence of student achievement, offering a concrete measure to evaluate the outcomes of instructional leadership practices and the effectiveness of school principals. By analyzing these records, the researchers could identify trends in student performance, compare achievements across different schools, and assess the overall impact of leadership strategies on academic outcomes.

Using students' academic records in documentary analysis allowed the researcher to triangulate data from other sources, such as the semi-structured interviews with principals and the survey with the teachers. This triangulation helps to validate findings and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between instructional leadership and student achievement. In the context of the Jamaican primary schools under study, these records are particularly valuable as they can reveal how different leadership styles and practices may contribute to variations in student outcomes. The analysis of these records also accounts for contextual factors, such as socioeconomic status, school resources, and community support, which can influence academic performance. The research focused on academic records for students in grades 4, 5, and 6. This was deliberate as the MoEY provides standardized testing for students at these grade levels through the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) assessment, which could ensure consistency and comparability in analyzing the data. By carefully examining and interpreting these records, the researcher can draw meaningful conclusions and offer evidence-based recommendations for enhancing instructional leadership and improving educational outcomes in similar contexts.

Curriculum Implementation Records

Curriculum implementation records served as a vital form of documentary analysis. These records provide detailed insights into how the curriculum is delivered, adapted, and assessed within schools, offering a comprehensive view of the instructional practices. By examining these records, the researcher could determine the alignment between the intended curriculum and the actual instructional strategies employed by the teachers. This alignment is crucial as it reflects the principals' effectiveness in effectively guiding and supporting teachers in implementing the curriculum. Through the analysis of lesson plans, instructional materials, and assessment tools, the researcher could identify patterns and gaps in curriculum delivery, which can be directly linked to instructional leadership practices.

Furthermore, curriculum implementation records enable the researcher to evaluate the consistency and fidelity of curriculum delivery across different classrooms and schools. This evaluation is essential for understanding how instructional leadership influences the standardization and quality of education provided to students. For instance, the researcher could analyze whether principals effectively monitor and support teachers to ensure that the curriculum is taught as intended, thus leading to improved student achievement. All public schools are expected to have a Curriculum Implementation Team (CIT) in place to support the curriculum effectively. The CIT is a dynamic and integral component of the educational framework, designed to ensure the successful realization of the vision, aims, values, and principles outlined in the National Standards Curriculum (NSC). This team typically comprises experienced educators, instructional leaders, and curriculum specialists who collaborate to align teaching practices with national educational standards. The CIT plays a pivotal role in monitoring and evaluating curriculum delivery, providing professional development for teachers, and offering continuous support to address any challenges in implementing the curriculum. By fostering a cohesive and supportive environment, the CIT enhances the quality of education, ensuring that all students receive a consistent and high-standard learning experience across public schools.

Additionally, these records can reveal how instructional leaders address diverse student needs, adapt instructional strategies, and integrate innovative teaching methods to enhance learning outcomes. By systematically examining curriculum implementation records, the research can provide robust evidence of the ways in which effective instructional leadership contributes to the overall educational experience and achievement of students, highlighting the critical role of principals in shaping academic success.

Inspections Reports

The National Education Inspectorate (NEI) reports serve as a valuable documentary analysis tool in this research. These reports, produced by the NEI, provide comprehensive evaluations of schools' performance, focusing on various aspects such as teaching quality, leadership effectiveness, student outcomes, and overall school environment. As a documentary source, NEI reports offer an authoritative and standardized assessment of schools, making them a crucial resource for researchers. They provide detailed insights into how well schools are meeting national educational standards and can highlight strengths and areas needing improvement in instructional leadership and school management.

In the context of this research, NEI reports can be used to assess the effectiveness of principals as instructional leaders. The reports typically include evaluations of principals' leadership styles, their ability to set a vision for the school, manage resources effectively, and foster a positive learning environment. By analyzing these aspects, the researcher can correlate the effectiveness of principals' leadership with student outcomes documented in the reports. This correlation can help identify specific leadership practices that contribute to better academic achievements, providing evidence of instructional leadership's direct or indirect influence on student performance. Additionally, the reports offer qualitative data, such as observations and feedback from inspectors, which can enrich the analysis and provide a more nuanced understanding of leadership dynamics within schools.

Furthermore, NEI reports can offer a broader contextual understanding of the educational landscape in which these seven primary schools operate. They often include comparative analyses across different schools and regions, allowing researchers to place their findings within a wider national context. This broader perspective is essential for understanding how external factors, such as government policies, resource allocation, and community involvement, may interact with instructional leadership and affect student achievement. By using NEI reports as part of the documentary analysis, the researcher can ensure a comprehensive and multi-faceted examination of the factors influencing educational outcomes. This approach not only strengthens the validity of the research findings but can also provide actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders looking to enhance educational quality and equity in Jamaica.

Teacher Surveys

Surveys are a valuable method for collecting quantifiable data, which the researcher can statistically analyze to identify patterns, correlations, and trends (Fowler, 2014). They offer a standardized approach to questioning, ensuring that all respondents receive the same prompts, enhancing the collected data's reliability (Groves et al., 2009). However, research highlights that surveys can be prone to various types of response bias, such as social desirability bias, where respondents may answer in ways they perceive as more socially acceptable (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Despite these challenges, surveys provide comprehensive information from a target audience about specific topics, making them a crucial tool in research.

This study conducted surveys with three teachers from each of the seven selected primary schools in Jamaica, totaling twenty-one respondents. These surveys aimed to gather data into the teachers' perspectives on their principals' instructional leadership practices and the impact of these practices on their teaching and the overall school environment. The survey included both quantitative questions, using a Likert five-point rating scale, and qualitative open-ended questions. The Likert scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), focusing on teachers' perceptions of their principals' effectiveness in key areas of instructional leadership. To allow teachers to provide detailed explanations and suggestions for improvement, which cannot be captured through numerical ratings alone, open-ended questions were included as part of the survey instrument.

The decision to include teachers with at least three years of experience in the education sector was deliberate, ensuring that respondents had sufficient exposure to the principals' leadership styles and practices. This selection criterion was crucial for obtaining informed and reliable feedback on instructional leadership and its impact on academic performance in primary schools. The researcher specifically chose educators familiar with the primary education context in Jamaica, acknowledging a potential bias due to her supervisory role over nineteen primary schools. This context was necessary to provide nuanced insights into instructional leadership at the primary level, a key focus area for the researcher. Hallinger (2011) noted that the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) consistently yields reliable and valid data on principal instructional leadership. The PIMRS framework categorizes instructional leadership into three areas: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and developing a positive school learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This framework, combined with the qualitative data collected, provided a comprehensive understanding of the instructional leadership dynamics in the selected schools.

Semi-Structured Interviews

This qualitative method is highly effective for gathering in-depth insights, as it allows for flexibility in questioning while maintaining a focused line of inquiry. The semi-structured format is ideal for exploring complex and nuanced aspects of instructional leadership. It provides a balance between structured questions that ensure all relevant topics are covered and open-ended questions that allow participants to express their thoughts and experiences in detail. This format encourages principals to reflect on their leadership practices, the strategies they employ, and the challenges they face, offering rich, context-specific information that is essential for understanding the dynamics at play in their respective schools.

The use of semi-structured interviews with the principals not only allows the researcher to delve into the specific ways in which instructional leadership practices are implemented and perceived in each school, but also empowers the principals to share their unique perspectives. By asking targeted questions, the interviewer can probe deeper into how principals define and communicate their school's mission, manage instructional programs, and foster a positive school climate which are core components of effective instructional leadership. This method

enables the principals to share concrete examples and anecdotes, providing a vivid picture of their day-to-day leadership activities and decision-making processes. Furthermore, it allows for the exploration of the principals' personal leadership styles and philosophies, as well as how these influence teacher performance and student outcomes. Such detailed narratives are invaluable for understanding the direct and indirect pathways through which leadership impacts the educational environment.

Moreover, semi-structured interviews offer the opportunity to uncover underlying factors that may not be immediately apparent through other data collection methods. For instance, principals can discuss the contextual challenges unique to their schools, such as resource constraints, community dynamics, or policy implications, which may affect their ability to implement certain leadership practices. This contextual information is critical for interpreting the findings and for understanding the broader systemic issues influencing instructional leadership and school effectiveness in the Jamaican primary education context. The semi-structured interview approach also facilitates the exploration of sensitive or potentially contentious issues, as the one-on-one setting allows principals to speak more openly and candidly than they might in a group setting. Overall, these interviews provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the instructional leadership practices in these schools, contributing to a deeper understanding of how such practices can enhance principal effectiveness and student achievement.

Triangulation

Collecting data from various sources allowed for triangulation of the findings in this study, providing a robust foundation for analyzing the impact of instructional leadership on principal effectiveness and student achievement in seven primary schools in Jamaica. Hollis (1995) emphasized that data triangulation helps reduce the likelihood of error in the findings, as similar results from multiple sources enhance confidence in the conclusions drawn. The data collection tools that involved documentary analysis, surveys, and semi-structured interviews offered a comprehensive view of the instructional leadership practices in these schools. By engaging with different data collection methods, the study was able to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences, ensuring that the findings were not reliant on a single data source and thereby increasing the study's overall credibility.

The use of methodological triangulation, as highlighted by Creswell (2014), further bolstered the validity and reliability of the study's findings. This multifaceted approach allowed for a deeper understanding of how instructional leadership influences student achievement, as it provided multiple lenses through which to view the phenomena being studied. By combining qualitative and quantitative data, the research provided a detailed analysis of the connection between instructional leadership and student outcomes. The diverse data sources also facilitated a more thorough examination of the specific practices and strategies employed by principals in these Jamaican primary schools, shedding light on their effectiveness in enhancing student achievement. This comprehensive analysis strengthens the study's conclusions and provides valuable insights for policymakers and educators looking to improve educational outcomes through effective instructional leadership.

Validity and Reliability

Validity in research is a cornerstone that ensures the accuracy, credibility, and trustworthiness of the findings, as perceived by both the evaluator and various stakeholders. It is paramount that validity is established throughout all phases of the research process, from data collection to analysis and interpretation. The concept of validity is the litmus test that determines whether the research is credible and accurately reflects the phenomena it aims to study. According to Burns (1999), validity is an essential criterion for assessing the quality and acceptability of research. Researchers often use different instruments to gather data, and the quality of these instruments is critical because the conclusions drawn from the research depend on the data collected. Therefore, ensuring that both the data and the instruments used are valid is imperative for producing reliable research outcomes (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Without proper validation of these tools, the research findings may be flawed, leading to incorrect conclusions and potentially misguided actions based on these conclusions.

Reliability is a critical requirement in research, referring to the findings' consistency, dependability, and replicability. Reliability is relatively straightforward in quantitative research because the data are often numerical, making it easier to obtain similar results. However, achieving identical results is more challenging in qualitative research, where data are narrative and subjective. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that in qualitative research, it is more

appropriate to focus on the dependability and consistency of the data rather than replicating exact results. The goal is to ensure that the findings are consistent and dependable based on the data collection processes. This requires meticulous attention to detail in the documentation and analysis phases to provide a clear and transparent account of the research methods and findings.

Both validity and reliability are fundamental to the integrity of research findings. Validity ensures that the research truly measures what it intends to measure, providing accurate and credible results. On the other hand, reliability ensures that these results are consistent and dependable, allowing for replication and verification by other researchers. Together, these concepts form the bedrock of sound research methodology, enabling researchers to draw meaningful and trustworthy conclusions. As such, careful attention must be paid to both the validity and reliability of the research instruments and processes to uphold the quality and usefulness of the research. This dual focus not only enhances the credibility of the study but also strengthens its contribution to the broader field of knowledge.

Limitations and delimitation of the Research

Research limitations represent the constraints of a study, arising from practical or theoretical challenges encountered by the researcher. These constraints restrict the conclusions that can be drawn from the study but also provide a basis for future research. Delimitations, like limitations, impose boundaries on a study, but they differ in their focus. Delimitations pertain to the scope of the research objectives and questions, representing the intentional choices you, as the researcher, make regarding what your study will and will not address. In essence, they define what your research aims and questions will and will not cover (Jansen 2022).

Limitations

1. **Sample Size and Generalizability:** The study's sample size is relatively small, consisting of only seven principals and twenty-one teachers from seven primary schools in one region. This limited sample size may not adequately represent the broader population of principals and teachers in other regions of Jamaica, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings.
2. **Regional Focus:** The study is confined to one of Jamaica's seven regions of the Ministry of Education and Youth. Regional differences in educational policies, socio-economic factors, and school environments might influence the results, making it challenging to apply the findings to other regions without additional research.
3. **Self-Reported Data:** Data collection methods include surveys, focus group discussions, and interviews, which rely on self-reported information from participants. This can introduce biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants may provide responses they believe are expected or favorable rather than their true experiences or opinions.
4. **Short Duration:** Educational outcomes often develop over extended periods. This study focuses on data for one academic year and, therefore, may not capture the long-term effects of instructional leadership on principals' effectiveness and student achievement.
5. **Contextual Factors:** Various contextual factors, such as community support, parental involvement, and available resources, can influence the effectiveness of instructional leadership. The study does not fully account for these external variables, which could impact the observed outcomes.

Delimitations

1. **Specific Focus:** The study deliberately explores the impact of instructional leadership on principals' effectiveness and student achievement. By narrowing the scope, the research can provide in-depth insights into this specific area without being distracted by broader educational leadership aspects.
2. **Primary Schools:** The study is limited to primary schools, which helps to standardize the educational context and reduce the variability that might arise from including different school levels (e.g., secondary schools). This focus allows for a more precise examination of instructional leadership within a specific educational setting.
3. **Geographical Limitation:** By concentrating on one region within the Ministry of Education and Youth in Jamaica, the study can deeply explore local practices, policies, and conditions affecting instructional leadership. This regional focus allows for a detailed contextual understanding that might be diluted in a broader study.
4. **Participant Selection:** Seven principals and twenty-one teachers from seven primary schools were selected. This delimited sample provides a balanced view of leadership practices from both administrative and instructional perspectives. It also allows for a more manageable and focused data collection process.
5. **Research Design:** The study employs a mixed-research approach, that is, a qualitative approach, supplemented by quantitative methods, to explore the nuanced aspects of instructional leadership and its effects. This design choice enables a detailed exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions, providing rich, contextual data.
6. **Specific Outcomes:** The study specifically examines principals' effectiveness and student achievement as the primary outcomes of interest. By defining these outcomes, the research can employ targeted instruments and methodologies to assess these areas accurately and provide relevant findings.

Data Collection Matrix

Data processing is one of the most challenging parts of research. A data collection matrix is a tool used in research and evaluation to organize and plan data collection systematically. It typically includes columns for the research questions, the indicators or variables to be measured, the data sources, the data collection methods, and the timing of data collection. The matrix helps ensure that all necessary data is collected systematically and consistently, aiding in the effective analysis and interpretation of results. This tool is especially valuable in complex studies involving multiple data sources and collection methods. It ensures a practical approach for gathering all the necessary data to address each evaluation question, while also making certain that all collected data serves a specific, intended purpose.

Table 2: Data Collection Matrix

Research Questions	Data Collection Tools			Timeline
	Documentary Analysis	Surveys	Semi-structured Interview	
How does instructional leadership, as perceived by primary school principals in Jamaica, influence their effectiveness in fostering teacher development and instructional practices?	√			June 2024 – July 2024
			√	August 2024 – September 2024
To what extent do instructional leadership practices of primary school principals in Jamaica correlate with student academic achievement?	√			June 2024 – July 2024
		√	√	August 2024 – September 2024
What are the perceived challenges that primary school principals encounter in implementing effective instructional leadership practices in Jamaica?		√	√	August 2024 – September 2024

Data Analysis

The data are presented based on the research questions for which answers were sought. The data are presented in alignment with the research questions posed. To transform raw data into new knowledge, I engaged in active and rigorous analytical processes throughout all phases of the research. Data collection methods included documentary analysis, surveys and anecdotal notes from semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data, obtained through surveys and numerical analysis, provided measurable evidence of patterns and correlations between instructional leadership practices and educational outcomes. This data is crucial for identifying statistical relationships and general trends across the seven primary schools within the selected region, and it will be presented numerically using tables and charts.

Conversely, qualitative data collected through documentary analysis and anecdotal notes from semi-structured interviews offer rich, contextual insights into the experiences and perceptions of principals and teachers. This aspect of the research delves deeper into the how and why behind the quantitative findings, uncovering the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of instructional leadership. The qualitative data will be presented through a thematic analysis, highlighting key patterns and insights that emerged from the data. The findings will be organized around major themes, with illustrative quotes from participants to provide depth and context. Visual aids such as tables and diagrams will be used to demonstrate relationships between themes and to compare different perspectives. Additionally, narrative descriptions will weave together these elements, ensuring a comprehensive and engaging presentation of the qualitative data that captures the complexity of the study.

Conclusion of Chapter 3

This research methodology provides a robust framework for investigating the impact of instructional leadership on principal effectiveness and student achievement. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the study aims to offer comprehensive insights into how instructional leadership practices can enhance educational outcomes. The mixed-methods approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Ethical considerations are meticulously addressed to ensure the integrity and validity of the research. Participants' confidentiality and informed consent are prioritized, and the research design incorporates strategies to mitigate potential biases. The triangulation of data sources enhances the study's reliability, as it cross-verifies information from multiple perspectives, thus strengthening the validity of the conclusions drawn. Furthermore, the research methodology outlines specific procedures for data collection and analysis. A data collection matrix is employed to systematically organize and manage the data, ensuring a comprehensive and coherent approach to analyzing the findings. The study also addresses limitations and delimitations, acknowledging the scope and boundaries of the research to provide a transparent and realistic assessment of its implications.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the data collected to assess the impact of instructional leadership on principals' effectiveness and student achievement in seven primary schools in Jamaica. A variety of data-gathering tools were utilized, including documentary reviews, teacher surveys, and semi-structured interviews with school principals. The documentary reviews covered essential records such as School Improvement Plans (SIPs), principals' appraisals, professional development records, and student performance data. These documents provided valuable context for understanding leadership practices and their outcomes.

Additionally, student performance in the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) examinations for grades 4, 5, and 6 in Mathematics and English was analyzed to identify trends in student achievement. Curriculum Implementation Team Records and National Education Inspections Reports further highlighted each school's operational strengths and areas for improvement, offering a comprehensive view of the instructional leadership practices and their overall effectiveness.

This chapter also draws on data from a teacher survey and semi-structured interviews conducted with the seven school principals. The survey responses and interview insights helped to capture the perceptions of both teachers and school leaders regarding the effectiveness of instructional leadership and its role in shaping student outcomes. Through these multiple lenses, the analysis seeks to uncover patterns of leadership behaviour, identify areas of strength and need for improvement, and uncover the relationship between leadership strategies and academic success.

Documentary Analysis

Data Collected from School Improvement Plans

The review of the School Improvement Plans (SIP) submitted by seven schools reveals the Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY) evaluation process, in which all seven schools completed and submitted their 3-year plans for assessment. Each SIP is rated against twelve established criteria, with a maximum of four points awarded for each criterion. In order to secure approval from the MoEY, a school's SIP must achieve a minimum score of thirty-nine points, equivalent to 81% of the total possible forty-eight points.

Table 3: School Improvement Plan Ratings

Schools	Aligned with MoEY Objectives (Maximum 4 points)	Score out of a total of 48 points	Percentage Score	Approved by the MoEY (minimum requirement 81%)
SCH01	3	39	81%	Yes
SCH02	3	32	67%	No
SCH03	4	39	81%	Yes
SCH04	4	39	81%	Yes
SCH05	3	35	73%	No
SCH06	4	42	88%	Yes
SCH07	3	34	71%	No

Schools were tasked with aligning their SIPs to ten strategic objectives set by the MoEY. These objectives are central to ensuring that the schools' goals and targets support the overarching national education agenda. The results, as shown in Table 1, demonstrate that four schools achieved a rating of three out of four points for alignment with the Ministry's objectives. This suggests that while their plans were closely aligned with the Ministry's goals, there remained some room for improvement. The remaining three schools, however, received a perfect score of four points, reflecting full alignment with the MoEY's strategic priorities.

Despite these varying levels of alignment, three schools, SCH02, SCH05, and SCH07, failed to achieve the minimum score required for SIP approval. These schools, which received alignment scores of three out of four, did not meet the overall 81% threshold, securing scores of 67%, 73%, and 71%, respectively. As a result, their SIPs were not approved by the MoEY.

This outcome indicates that a failure to fully meet the Ministry's prescribed standards may signal inadequacies in addressing the instructional needs that are critical to improving student achievement. In particular, schools whose plans were not approved may have struggled to develop comprehensive, well-structured strategies that sufficiently targeted areas such as curriculum enhancement, teacher development, and student support systems.

Furthermore, the data suggest that alignment with the MoEY's objectives is not the sole factor in determining the success of an SIP. While some schools aligned their plans with the Ministry's goals, their overall scores still fell short, pointing to broader issues within their planning process. This highlights the importance of not only aligning with strategic objectives but also ensuring the overall quality and depth of the SIP to adequately address instructional leadership, resource management, and student outcomes.

The schools that failed to receive approval may need to revisit their planning processes, particularly focusing on strengthening areas such as resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and the development of data-driven strategies to meet student needs. The importance of creating robust and well-aligned improvement plans cannot be overstated, as these are crucial tools for driving sustainable academic success and fostering a culture of continuous improvement within schools.

Data collected from Principals Appraisal

The principal appraisal instrument evaluates professional practices across four key domains: administration and management, instructional leadership, enabling environment for learning, and personal attributes and development. The performance is categorised as exemplary, strong, satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Exemplary describes the most outstanding performance and unsatisfactory denotes performance for which immediate leadership development is required (Guidelines for the Appraisal of Educational Professional). The collected appraisal data from seven principals was utilized to analyze various dimensions of instructional leadership and its impact on student outcomes. This analysis aims to provide insights into the leadership practices of the principals. The domain of instructional leadership is segmented into three sub-categories: curriculum; teaching, learning and assessment, and evaluation. These sub-categories offer a detailed perspective on how different aspects of instructional leadership contribute to student academic achievement. The performance appraisal records provided detailed evaluations of the principals' leadership skills, decision-making processes, and overall impact on school culture and student achievement.

Table 4: Principals Appraisals (1)

Leadership Domain 2: Instructional Leadership					
Principals	Standards				
	Curriculum (10)	Teaching Learning and Assessment (20)		Evaluation (10)	TOTAL (40)
	Develops and implements a system for managing and facilitating student achievement and learning based on content and performance standards	Develops and executes a system for designing and implementing teaching and learning assessment tasks and activities to ensure that all students achieve proficiency.	Manages and analyses performance data to identify patterns of achievement and underachievement, enabling the design and implementation of appropriate instructional interventions	Evaluates the performance of all staff and students in the learning environment. Utilises summative and formative evaluation measures to manage and improve learning outcomes.	
SCH01	8	6	6	7	27
SCH02	7	6	7	6	26
SCH03	10	8	6	7	31
SCH04	9	6.5	7	7	29.5
SCH05	7	6.5	6	6	25.5
SCH06	9	7	8	8	32
SCH07	8	6	6	7	27

Table 5: Principal Appraisal (2)

Principals	Instructional Leadership Domain				
	Raw Score	Exemplary 90-100%	Strong 70 to 89 %	Satisfactory 60 to 69 %	Unsatisfactory Below 60%
SCH01	27			67.5%	
SCH02	26			65%	
SCH03	31		77.5%		
SCH04	29.5		74%		
SCH05	25.5			64%	
SCH06	32		80%		
SCH07	27			67.5%	

The instructional leadership domain was a central area of focus when reviewing the principals' annual performance appraisals for the academic year 2023. Each principal underwent an evaluation process aimed at assessing their effectiveness in guiding instructional practices within their schools. As outlined in Table 5, the results indicated that three principals were rated as strong in the area of instructional leadership, while four principals received a satisfactory rating. However, it is notable that no principal achieved the exemplary rating, which represents the highest level of performance. At the same time, none of the principals were rated as unsatisfactory, indicating that all were meeting at least basic expectations.

What is particularly significant is the connection between these ratings and the outcomes of the schools' School Improvement Plans (SIPs). All three schools that did not have their SIPs approved received only a satisfactory rating in instructional leadership, with scores ranging between 64% and 67.5%. This is in contrast to the schools that received higher instructional leadership ratings and had their SIPs approved. Moreover, none of the schools with unapproved SIPs managed to achieve full scores for aligning their goals with the Ministry of Education and Youth's (MoEY) strategic objectives, a key criterion in the SIP evaluation process.

This finding raises important questions about the relationship between instructional leadership and the quality of school improvement planning. The alignment issue, where goals were not fully aligned with the MoEY's strategic objectives, may suggest that principals rated as satisfactory in instructional leadership may not have been able to provide the level of guidance or oversight necessary to produce high-quality improvement plans. This potential correlation underscores the importance of strong instructional leadership in ensuring that schools can develop and execute effective strategies that directly impact student learning and achievement. As instructional leadership is a critical factor in driving academic improvement, its adequacy appears to be closely linked to the successful planning and implementation of school-wide goals.

Data Collected from Professional Development Records

The tables below provide information about the professional development (PD) training attended by principals and teachers, Table 6, specifically highlighting the number of general PD sessions and Table 7, focused on instructional leadership (IL) PD sessions.

Table 6: # of General PD attended by Participants

Participants	# of Professional Development Training				
	0	1	2	3	4 or more
Principals	0	1	6	0	0
Teachers	0	8	11	2	0

Table 7: # of Instructional Leadership PD sessions

Participants	# PD for Instructional Leadership			
	0	1	2	3 or more
Principals	0	5	2	0
Teachers	14	7	0	0

The majority of principals, six out of seven, have attended two PD sessions, with only one attending a single session. None of the principals participated in more than two sessions. This suggests a moderate level of professional development but raises concerns about the depth of exposure to best practices or leadership skills. Limited PD engagement could hinder principals from fully developing the instructional leadership skills necessary to drive improvements in teaching and learning. Only two principals attended two sessions focused on instructional leadership, while five attended just one session. None participated in three or more IL-focused sessions. Instructional leadership is crucial for fostering a culture of continuous improvement in schools, and the limited participation in IL-specific PD indicates that principals may not be receiving sufficient training in this key area. This could potentially limit their effectiveness as instructional leaders, impacting their ability to influence student achievement positively.

Most teachers, eleven out of twenty-one, attended two PD sessions, and eight attended one session. However, only two attended three sessions, with none participating in more than three. While teachers are somewhat engaged in general PD, similar to principals, their limited exposure to extended or more frequent PD could restrict improvements in instructional practices, indirectly affecting student outcomes. Notably, fourteen teachers did not attend any IL-focused PD, and seven attended only one session. None attended two or more sessions. This is a significant gap, as teachers need to understand and collaborate with principals on instructional leadership initiatives. The absence of extensive IL training for teachers could limit their ability to align with principals' instructional goals, further reducing the impact of leadership on classroom instruction and student achievement.

Data Collected from Students Performance Records

The MoEY provide students performance in the form of achievement levels for each core subjects. These achievement levels are:

- Beginning – Student demonstrates limited or no evidence of the required competence necessary at this grade level, as specified in the National Standards Curriculum and will need intensive on-going academic.
- Developing - Student demonstrates partial evidence of the required competence necessary at this grade level, as specified in the National Standards Curriculum and will need targeted academic support.
- Proficient - Student demonstrates adequate evidence of the required competence necessary at this grade level, as specified in the National Standards Curriculum and may need minimal academic support and/or extended learning activities.
- Highly Proficient - Student demonstrates an advanced level of competence necessary at this grade level, as specified in the National Standards Curriculum and may need extended learning activities.

Figure 2: Grade 4 Mathematics PEP Performance Data

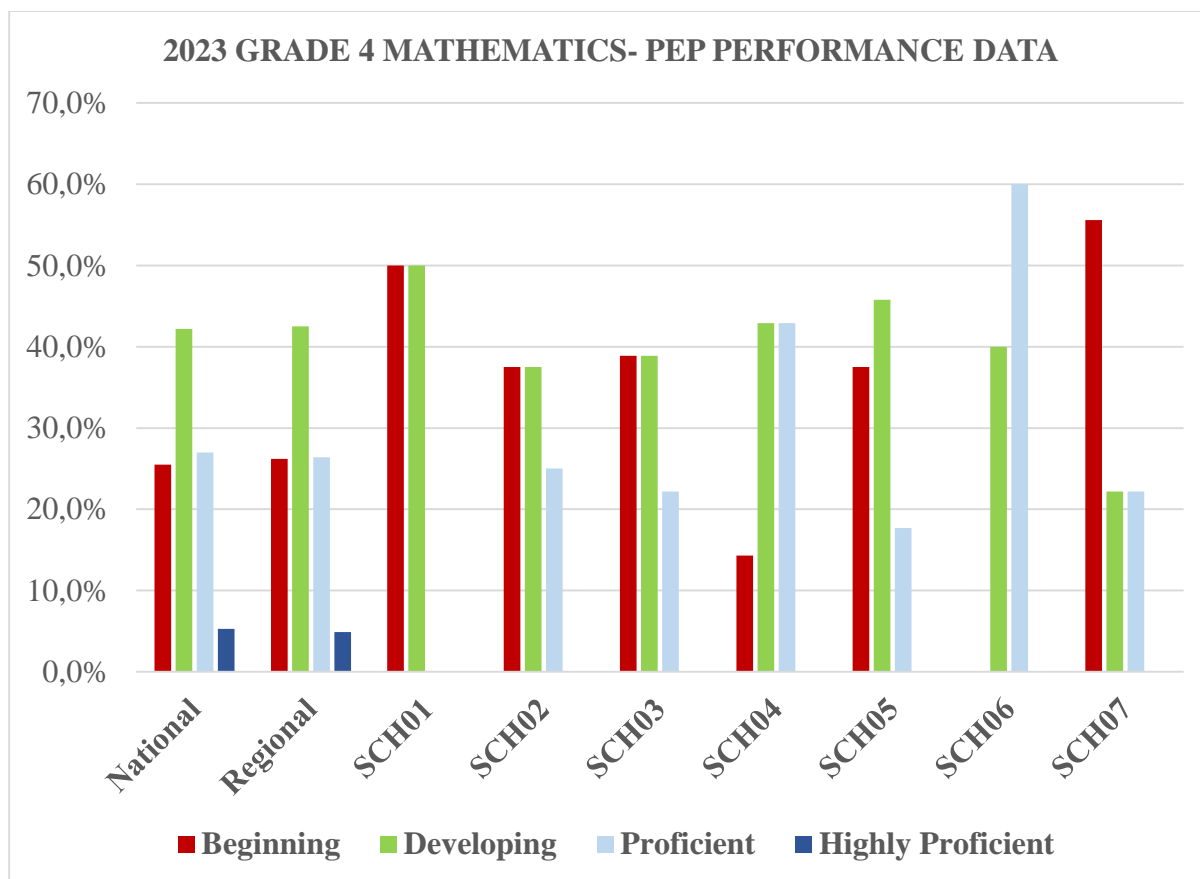


Figure 2 presents data on student achievement in the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) Grade 4 examination. The performance data for seven schools is compared alongside both National and Regional performance benchmarks. Nationally and regionally, approximately 69% of students were rated at the Developing and Proficient levels. For the seven schools, the percentage of students at the Developing and Proficient levels combined ranged from 44% to 100%. However, none of these schools had students who achieved a rating of Highly Proficient. In contrast, at both the National and Regional levels, about 5% of students were rated as Highly Proficient. It is noteworthy that 50% and 55% of students at SCH01 and SCH07, respectively, were rated at the Beginning level. Schools SCH02, SCH03, and SCH05 each had approximately 38% of their students at the Beginning level. On the other hand, SCH06 had no students rated at the Beginning level, with 40% rated at the Developing level and 60% at the Proficient level.

Figure 3: Grade 5 Mathematics PEP Performance Data

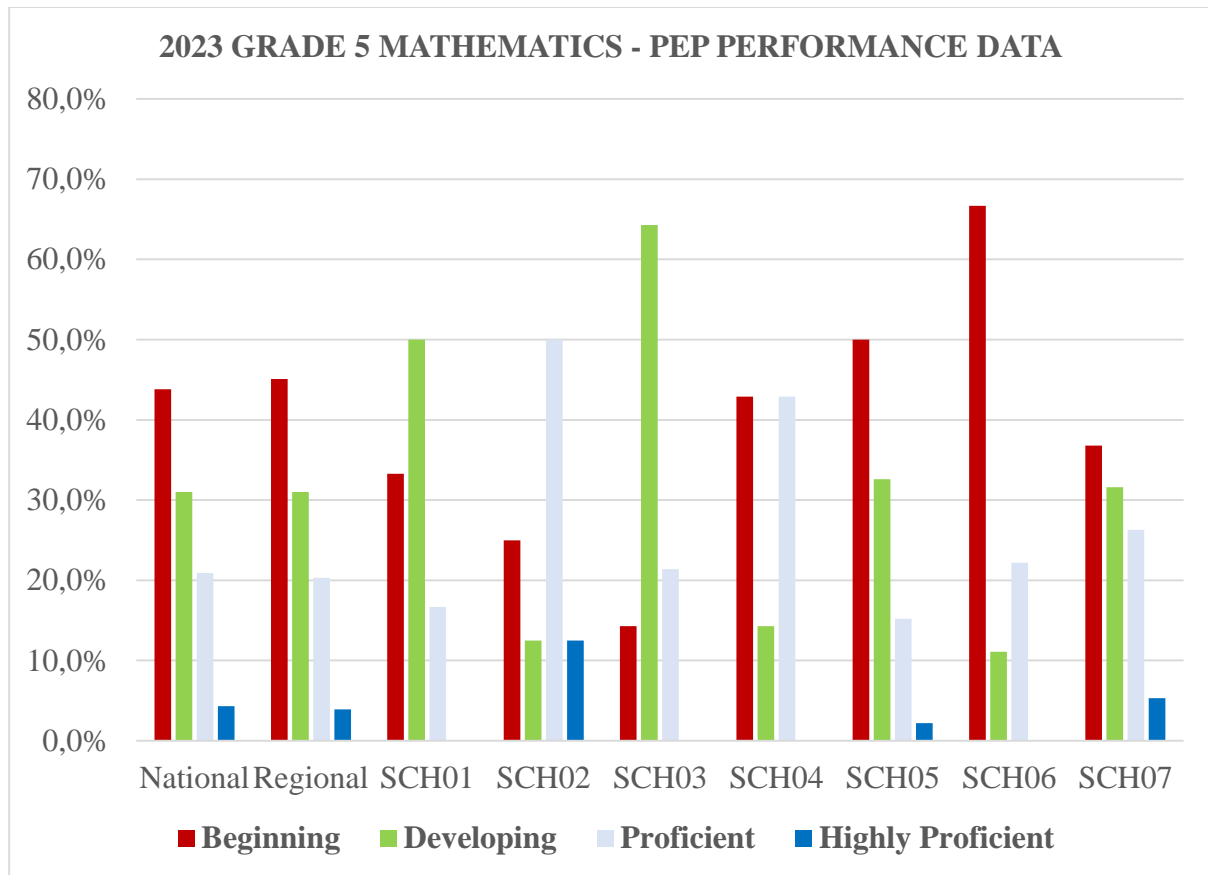


Figure 3 illustrates student performance data for the Grade 5 Mathematics PEP examination. At both the regional and national levels, 45% and 44% of students, respectively, were rated at the Beginning level. All seven schools had students rated at the Beginning level, with percentages ranging from 14% to 67%. Notably, SCH07 had 67% of its students and SCH05 had 50% at the Beginning level. Nationally and regionally, approximately 4% of students were rated as Highly Proficient. Among the seven schools, three had students achieving this level: SCH02 with 12%, SCH05 with 2.2%, and SCH07 with 5.3%. Overall, the percentage of students rated at the Developing and Proficient levels combined ranged from 33% to 86% across the seven schools.

Figure 4: Grade 6 Mathematics PEP Performance Data

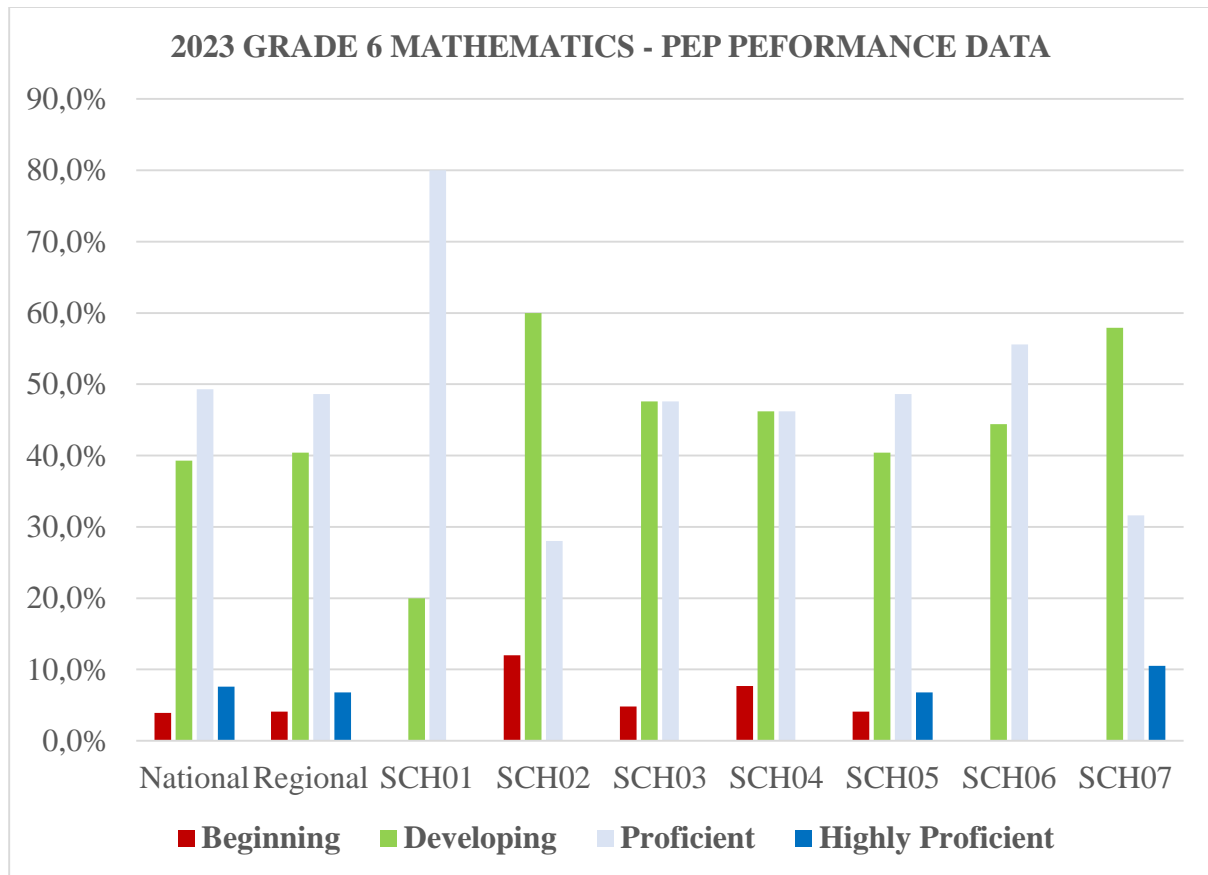


Figure 4 presents student performance data for the PEP Grade 6 Mathematics examination. Nationally and regionally, approximately 7% of students were rated as Highly Proficient. Among the seven schools, two had students in this category: SCH05 with 6.8% and SCH07 with 10.5%. Four of the seven schools had students rated at the Beginning level: SCH02 with 12%, SCH03 with 4.8%, SCH04 with 7.7%, and SCH05 with 4.1%. The majority of students at both the school level and the regional and national levels were rated in the combined categories of Developing and Proficient.

The data across Figures 2, 3, and 4 highlight student performance in the PEP Mathematics examinations for Grades 4, 5, and 6, revealing varying levels of achievement across seven schools in comparison to national and regional benchmarks. In all three examinations, a significant portion of students were rated at the Developing and Proficient levels, with percentages ranging from 33% to 100% combined across the schools. However, none of the schools achieved a significant presence in the Highly Proficient category, with only a small

percentage of students reaching this level nationally and regionally. Additionally, the Beginning level ratings were notably higher in some schools, particularly in the Grade 5 Mathematics examination, where up to 67% of students were rated at this level. Overall, the data indicate areas for improvement, particularly in advancing students from the Beginning level to higher proficiency levels.

Figure 5: Grade 4 Language Arts PEP Performance Data

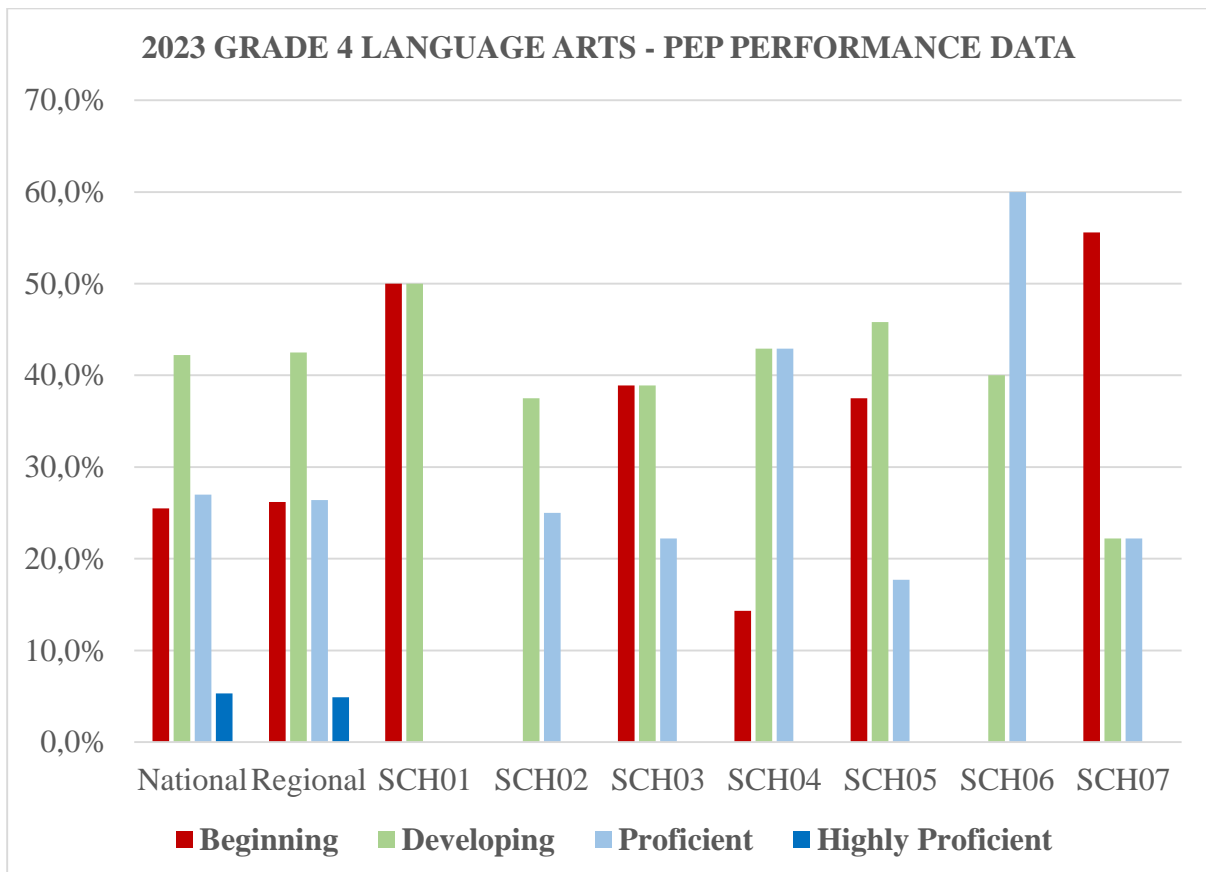


Figure 5 depicts student performance in the PEP Grade 4 Language Arts examination. Nationally and regionally, approximately 4% of students achieved a Highly Proficient rating, but none of the seven schools had students in this category. The majority of students were rated at the Beginning level, with percentages ranging from 43% to 72%. Additionally, 38% to 56% of students across the schools were rated at the Developing and Proficient levels combined. Notably, SCH01 had no students rated as Proficient; instead, 50% were at the Beginning level and 50% at the Developing level.

Figure 6: Grade 5 Language Arts PEP Performance Data

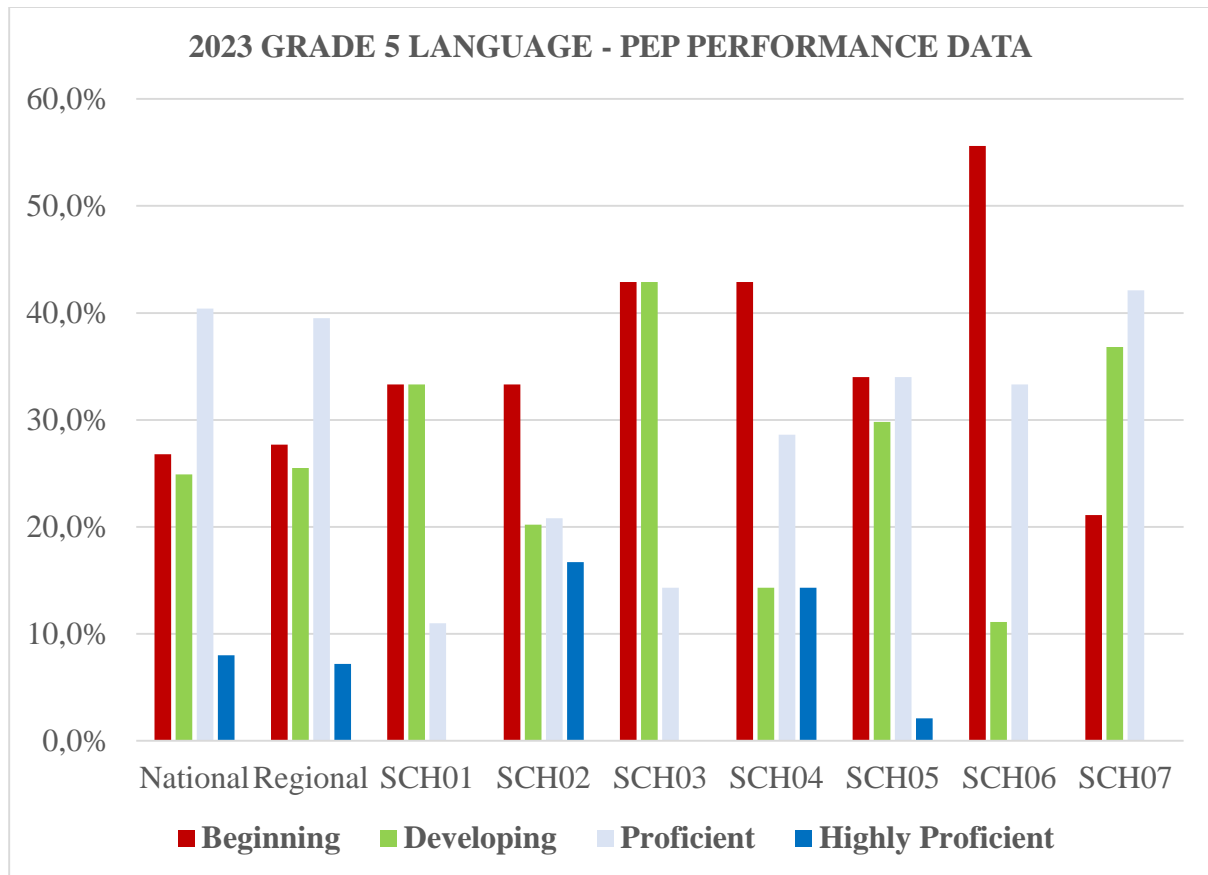


Figure 6 presents student performance data for the PEP Grade 5 Language Arts examination. Nationally, 8% of students were rated as Highly Proficient, with 7.2% achieving this level regionally. Among the seven schools, three had students in this category: SCH02 with 16.7%, SCH04 with 14.3%, and SCH05 with 2.1%. National and regional data indicate that approximately 27% of students were rated at the Beginning level. Within the seven schools, the percentage of students at this level ranged from 21% to 56%. Additionally, 41% to 78% of students were rated as Developing or Proficient, aligning with the 66% of students in these categories at the national and regional levels.

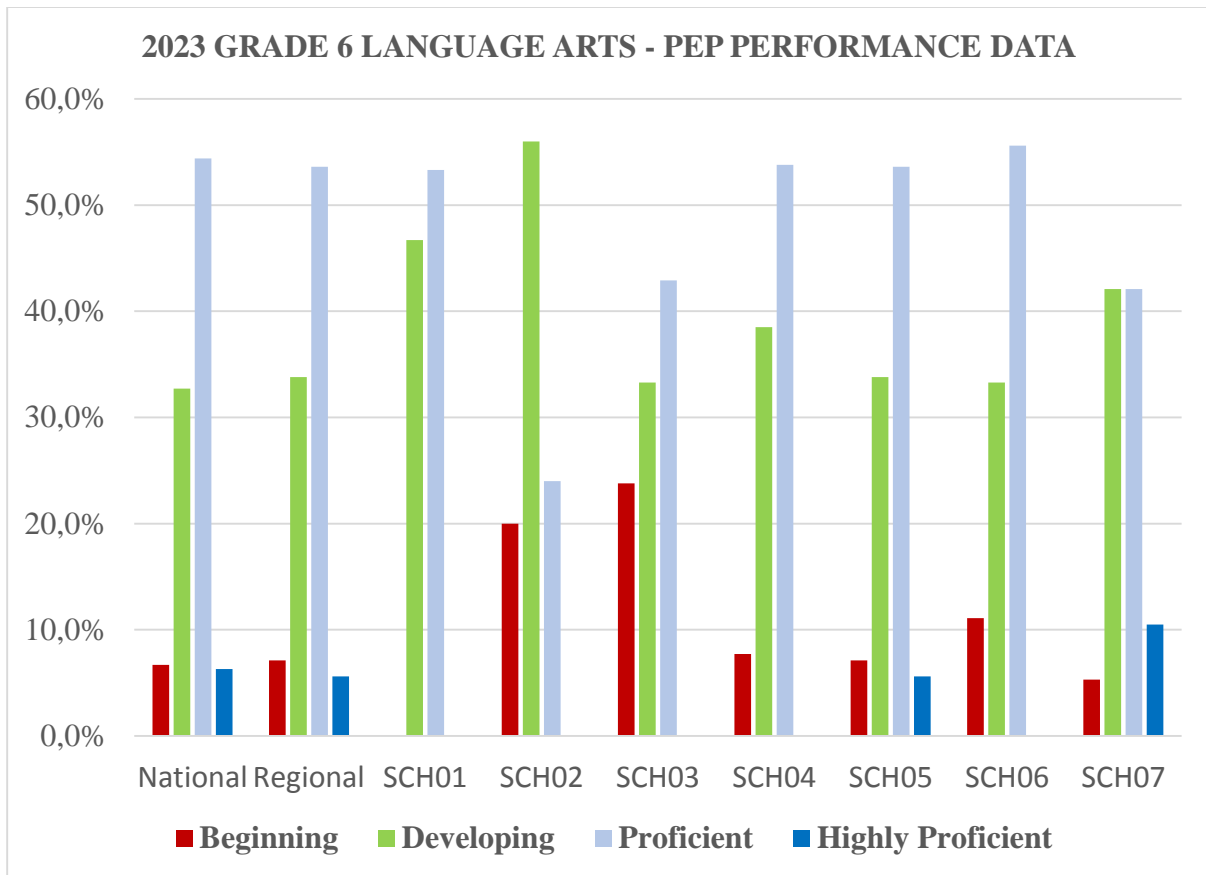
Table 7: Grade 6 Language Arts PEP Performance Data

Figure 7 illustrates student performance in the PEP Grade 6 Language Arts examination. Nationally, 6.3% of students were rated as Highly Proficient, with 5.6% reaching this level regionally. Among the seven schools, only two had students achieving this rating: SCH05 with 5.6% and SCH07 with 10.5%. At both the national and regional levels, 7% of students were rated at the Beginning level. Across the seven schools, the percentage of students in this category ranged from 5.3% to 24%. Nationally and regionally, 54% of students were rated as Proficient. Four of the seven schools had just over 50% of their students rated as Proficient in alignment with the regional and national ratings, while SCH07 had 42%, SCH03 had 43%, and SCH02 had 24%.

The data across Figures 5, 6, and 7 highlight student performance in the PEP Language Arts examinations for Grades 4, 5, and 6. Nationally and regionally, the percentage of students rated as Highly Proficient was consistently low, ranging from 4% to 8%. While some schools did have students achieving this level, none reached this benchmark in Grade 4. Beginning-level ratings varied across the schools, with figures ranging from 5.3% to 72%, reflecting areas needing improvement. In contrast, the majority of students across all three grades were rated as Developing or Proficient, with combined percentages aligning closely with national and regional trends. Schools generally showed stronger performance in Grade 6, with a majority rated Proficient, while Grade 4 saw higher percentages at the Beginning level.

Analysing student performance in the PEP Mathematics and Language Arts examinations across Grades 4, 5, and 6 highlights critical trends that underscore the importance of effective instructional leadership in driving academic success. The limited representation at the Highly Proficient level and the disproportionately high Beginning-level ratings, particularly in Grade 5 Mathematics and Grade 4 Language Arts, point to the need for instructional leaders to work closely with the curriculum implementation team in adopting targeted, data-driven strategies to address these gaps. Principals play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of continuous improvement by supporting teacher development, aligning instructional practices with student needs, and ensuring the availability of resources to strengthen foundational skills. These findings emphasize that solid instructional leadership is essential to elevate student achievement and promote higher levels of academic excellence across all proficiency levels

Data Collected from Curriculum Implementation Records

Curriculum Implementation Teams (CIT) are often crucial for school leadership as they facilitate curriculum-related discussions, ensure alignment between teaching practices and curriculum goals, and support instructional improvements. These teams can provide an important mechanism for principals to exercise their instructional leadership by overseeing and guiding curriculum delivery.

Table 8 shows the establishment of CITs and the number of meetings held during the academic year 2023.

Table 8: # of CIT Meetings

Schools	CIT Established	# of Meetings held for the academic year 2023
SCH01	Yes	1
SCH02	Yes	1
SCH03	Yes	2
SCH04	Yes	2
SCH05	Yes	1
SCH06	Yes	2
SCH07	Yes	1

All seven schools have established CITs, which indicates that there is a formal structure in place to support curriculum implementation. However, the number of meetings held by these teams varies, with some schools only having one meeting during the academic year and others holding two. This suggests that the principals in these schools may not be fully leveraging CITs as platforms to regularly engage in instructional leadership activities.

Four schools, SCH01, SCH02, SCH05, SCH07, held only one CIT meeting for the entire academic year. This limited engagement might imply a weaker focus on sustained instructional leadership practices. Infrequent meetings reduce opportunities for principals to guide the implementation of the curriculum effectively, monitor progress, address challenges, and adapt instructional strategies. The lack of regular collaboration between the CIT and the principal could hinder efforts to create consistent and ongoing improvements in instruction.

Three schools, SCH03, SCH04, SCH06, held two CIT meetings, which, while better than just one, still suggests a relatively low frequency of collaboration. Ideally, more regular meetings would provide a stronger framework for principals to influence instructional practices, set curriculum goals, and provide feedback.

Infrequent meetings may limit the effectiveness of principals in their role as instructional leaders and reduce the potential for meaningful impact on student achievement.

Table 9: Relationship among CIT Meetings, Appraisals and SIPs

Schools	# of CIT meeting held	Appraisal Rating for Instructional Leadership	SIP Approved
SCH01	1	Satisfactory	Yes
SCH02	1	Satisfactory	No
SCH03	2	Strong	Yes
SCH04	2	Strong	Yes
SCH05	1	Satisfactory	No
SCH06	2	Strong	Yes
SCH07	1	Satisfactory	No

The data suggests a relationship between the frequency of Curriculum Implementation Team (CIT) meetings and the appraisal ratings for instructional leadership across schools. Schools that held two CIT meetings, SCH03, SCH04, SCH06, received a "Strong" rating for instructional leadership, whereas schools that held only one meeting, SCH01, SCH02, SCH05, SCH07, were rated "Satisfactory." This indicates that regular CIT meetings may provide principals with more opportunities to engage in and lead instructional initiatives, which in turn enhances their overall effectiveness as instructional leaders. Principals who lead more frequent CIT meetings may have better tools to collaborate with teachers, review curriculum progress, and address instructional challenges, which can lead to stronger leadership ratings.

Furthermore, there is a clear link between strong instructional leadership and the approval of School Improvement Plans (SIP), which are crucial for driving school-wide changes aimed at improving student achievement. All schools with a "Strong" appraisal rating, SCH03, SCH04, SCH06, had their SIPs approved, while schools with only a "Satisfactory" rating were less likely to have their SIPs approved, with only SCH01 receiving approval.

This suggests that stronger instructional leadership not only results from more frequent CIT meetings but also increases the likelihood of strategic plans for school improvement being accepted, creating a pathway for structured, data-driven efforts to boost student outcomes.

Data Collected from Inspection Reports

The National Task Force on Educational Reform made the recommendation that a National Quality Assurance Authority (NQAA) be established to address the issue of performance and accountability in the educational system. In line with this recommendation, the Government of Jamaica has established an independent NEI to address the issues identified and effect changes complementary to the transformation of the education sector (NEI website). The data provided offers insights into the relationship between instructional leadership and school performance, particularly focusing on how principals' leadership impacts overall school effectiveness and student achievement.

The NEI assess schools using a five-point scale that ranges from exceptionally high (Level 5) to needs immediate support (Level 1), with clear expectations for each level. Schools that achieve Level 4 are considered to be performing at a good standard, a realistic goal for all schools. At the lower end, schools at Level 1 are in urgent need of intervention, and if deemed unsatisfactory (Level 2), immediate action is required to improve key aspects of their operations. This evaluation framework allows us to better understand the appraisal ratings and overall effectiveness of the instructional leaders in these schools. The schools are evaluated based on eight key performance indicators (KPI), namely school leadership and management, teaching support for learning, students' academic performance, students' academic progress, students' personal and social development, use of the human and material resources, curriculum and enhancement programmes, and student safety, security, and wellbeing.

Table 10: Relationship of Inspection Report, Appraisals and SIPs

Schools	Appraisal Rating for Instructional Leadership	SIP Approved	Year of Last Inspection	Overall Rating	Was the present instructional leader the same at the inspection?
SCH01	Satisfactory	Yes	2014	unsatisfactory	No
SCH02	Satisfactory	No	2018	Unsatisfactory	Yes
SCH03	Strong	Yes	2014	Unsatisfactory	No
SCH04	Strong	Yes	2014	satisfactory	No
SCH05	Satisfactory	No	2017	Satisfactory	Yes
SCH06	Strong	Yes	2016	Satisfactory	No
SCH07	Satisfactory	No	2019	Satisfactory	Yes

A review of the data shows that schools SCH01 and SCH02 have unsatisfactory overall ratings, even though both have satisfactory instructional leadership appraisals. This suggests that instructional leadership alone may not always guarantee higher school performance. In the case of SCH01, the change in leadership between the last inspection and the present may explain why instructional leadership had minimal impact on school effectiveness. SCH02, however, had the same instructional leader during the inspection, yet it still rated unsatisfactory overall. This indicates that other factors, such as resource allocation, teacher quality, or student background, may play a significant role in student achievement and the overall effectiveness of the school, despite having competent leadership.

On the other hand, schools SCH04, SCH05, SCH06, and SCH07, which all received satisfactory overall ratings, either had strong instructional leadership appraisals or consistent leadership over time. For example, SCH05 and SCH07, where the same instructional leader was present during the inspection, achieved satisfactory overall ratings. This indicates that consistent instructional leadership may contribute positively to maintaining at least a minimum acceptable level of school performance.

However, the data does not clearly show a correlation between leadership strength and higher ratings, as schools with strong instructional leadership like SCH04 and SCH06 also received only satisfactory overall ratings. Interestingly, school SCH03, despite having strong instructional leadership, was rated as unsatisfactory. This further emphasizes that while leadership is important, it is not the sole determinant of a school's success. The data suggests that even strong instructional leaders may face challenges in improving school effectiveness, potentially due to external factors such as student demographics, community involvement, or systemic issues within the education system.

It could be concluded that while strong instructional leadership appears to play a crucial role in achieving satisfactory school ratings, it is not always a guarantee of higher performance. The data underscores the complexity of school improvement and the importance of other factors in conjunction with leadership. For principals to be effective and to significantly impact student achievement, leadership efforts must be complemented by resources, teacher development, and supportive educational policies.

Table 11: NEI Key Performance Indicators Ratings

Criteria	SCH01	SCH02	SCH03	SCH04	SCH05	SCH06	SCH07
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory	In need of immediate support	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching in Support of Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Students Performance in English and Mathematics	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Students' Progress in English and Mathematics	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Provision for Curriculum Enhancement Programmes	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Overall Ratings	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

The data provided sheds light on the relationship between instructional leadership, school management, and student outcomes in the context of English and Mathematics performance. The table suggests that schools with satisfactory leadership and management often see corresponding improvements in other areas, though not necessarily in student performance. For example, SCH01 and SCH04 both have satisfactory leadership ratings, but SCH01 struggles in English and Mathematics performance, receiving unsatisfactory ratings in both student performance and curriculum provision.

This disconnect implies that while leadership can create a stable learning environment, it alone may not directly influence student outcomes in core subjects like English and Mathematics.

In contrast, SCH02, which is rated as "In need of Immediate Support" in leadership and management, surprisingly shows satisfactory ratings in both teaching support and student progress in English and Mathematics. However, the school's unsatisfactory rating in curriculum provision and overall performance suggests that weaknesses in leadership may hinder long-term improvement, especially in ensuring a well-rounded educational experience. SCH03 further illustrates this point, as it receives unsatisfactory ratings across all categories, demonstrating that ineffective leadership can have a pervasive negative impact on school functioning, from teaching support to student performance.

Schools SCH05, SCH06, and SCH07, all with satisfactory leadership, show a more consistent pattern of satisfactory ratings in other areas, including teaching support, student progress, and curriculum provision. However, like other schools, they still face challenges in improving student performance in English and Mathematics, which is rated unsatisfactory across the board. This indicates that while instructional leadership may provide a strong foundation for operational efficiency, it does not automatically translate into better student outcomes in academic subjects. These findings suggest that principals' effectiveness in fostering an environment of strong instructional leadership may need to be paired with targeted strategies for academic improvement to drive higher student achievement.

The data underscores the importance of instructional leadership in maintaining satisfactory overall school operations but highlights that leadership alone may not be enough to improve student achievement in key subjects like English and Mathematics. Effective leadership must be complemented by tailored academic interventions and curriculum enhancements to address gaps in student performance. Therefore, improving student outcomes may require a more holistic approach that includes both strong leadership and focused support for academic achievement.

Data Collected from Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews offer the flexibility to explore key areas of instructional leadership while allowing participants to share their personal narratives and perspectives. This approach enabled the researcher to probe specific areas such as leadership vision, instructional strategies, teacher support, and the challenges principals face as instructional leaders and how their instructional leadership impacts students' performances. The semi-structured interview allowed for a more natural, conversational flow while still being organized enough to collect the data. Each of the seven school principals was asked the same questions. However, additional questions were posed based on responses for clarity and follow-up. The researcher visited each school on the agreed date, and approximately two hours were spent with each principal for the interview. In analyzing the data, the researcher focused on sorting and coding each interview to identify patterns, often using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. The inductive approach was used in analyzing coding the data; that is, the researcher allowed the data provided to guide and determine the themes identified.

The first three questions were designed to collect demographic data from the principals and help them feel comfortable with the interview process. The seven principals' total years of experience in education ranged from 18 to 41 years, with their tenure as principals varying between 6 and 14 years. Regarding qualifications, one principal (SCH01) holds a diploma in education and has worked in the field for 41 years, including seven years as a principal. Another principal (SCH03) has a bachelor's degree and has spent 27 years in education, 6 of which were in the role of principal. The remaining five principals hold master's degrees, with their overall experience in education ranging from 18 to 38 years and their time as principals ranging from six to fourteen years.

Q4: Can you describe your vision for your school and how you communicate this vision to your staff, students, and other stakeholders?

All seven principals shared that their schools have both vision and mission statements, which articulate the direction and long-term goals of their institutions. They noted that having these statements is a requirement of the Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY). The principals described their visions for their schools, which included becoming schools of choice where

parents would prefer to enroll their children. They emphasized goals such as achieving high literacy and numeracy rates and ensuring excellent student performance.

One principal (SCH07) specifically mentioned that the school's vision includes equipping students with 21st-century skills to ensure a smooth transition to secondary education. Two principals (SCH02 & SCH06) highlighted their aim to increase student enrolment to elevate their schools' classification from Grade 1 to Grade 2. Primary schools in Jamaica's context are categorized from Grade 1 to Grade 5 based on enrolment data, with Grade 1 being the smallest category, accommodating a maximum of 150 students.

The principals reported using various methods to communicate the school vision to stakeholders. Commonly mentioned channels included meetings with the school board, staff, and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). The vision is shared with students at devotions, and through other discussion forums. The school improvement plans for all seven schools also include the vision and mission statements. Three principals (SCH03, SCH04 & SCH05) noted that the vision statement was prominently displayed on a section of the school wall for visitors to see upon entry. In addition, five principals (including the previously mentioned ones, SCH02, SCH03, SCH04, SCH05 & SCH07) displayed the vision statement in the principal's office, ensuring it was visible to all who entered.

Q5: Is there an Instructional Plan for your School?

Q6: What specific strategies do you use to manage the instructional programme in your school?

Four principals (SCH03, SCH04, SCH05 & SCH06) confidently confirmed that their schools have an instructional plan, while three (SCH01, SCH02 & SCH07) were uncertain in their responses. However, all principals could describe the systems they have in place to monitor teaching and learning. Five principals (SCH02, SCH03, SCH04, SCH05 & SCH06) referenced the Curriculum Implementation Team as a strategy to ensure that the curriculum is delivered according to the National Standards Curriculum requirements. Three principals (SCH03, SCH05 & SCH07) mentioned the school improvement plan, noting that it sets student performance targets, which teachers are expected to incorporate into their action plans.

All principals highlighted regular classroom walkthroughs, both formal and informal lesson observations, and annual teacher appraisals as key strategies. In a follow-up question, three principals were asked to clarify what they meant by "regular" walkthroughs, and they explained that these occur on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Additionally, all principals stated that teachers prepare lesson plans, which are vetted for quality and alignment with the curriculum.

Two principals (SCH05 & SCH07) emphasized the importance of professional development as a strategy to enhance teachers' competency in curriculum delivery. Five principals mentioned common planning time as a key strategy. When the researcher asked the remaining two principals about this, they confirmed that common planning time is also timetabled at their schools, typically on specific days of the week. Therefore, all seven schools have designated time for teachers to plan together.

Three principals (SCH01, SCH05 & SCH07) spoke about using data analysis as a strategy, explaining that teachers are required to analyze student performance data to inform their lesson planning and intervention strategies. Two (SCH04 & SCH06) principals shared that they use mentorship as a strategy, pairing experienced teachers with new teachers to provide guidance on lesson planning and content delivery.

Additionally, one principal (SCH07) mentioned an incentive system where teachers are rewarded for outstanding student achievement. Three principals (SCH05, SCH06 & SCH07) highlighted the use of a "Principal's Honour Roll" to recognize student achievement, while two others (SCH05, SCH07) mentioned that students are recognized at award ceremonies and given scholarships for high academic performance.

Figure 8: How do Principals Support Instructional Leadership

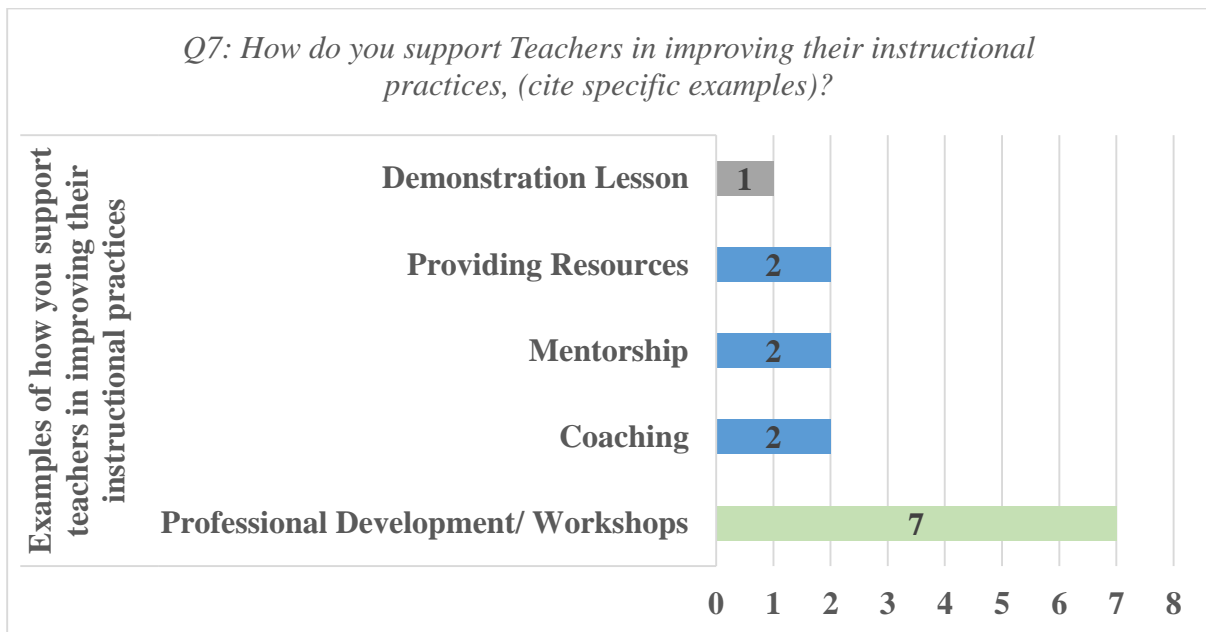


Figure 8 shows that all seven principals used professional development as a key strategy for supporting teachers in improving their instructional practices. The specific methods varied across schools, indicating a tailored approach to teacher development.

- Mentorship: Two principals (SCH04 & SCH06) implemented mentorship programs to guide less experienced teachers, providing them with direct support from more experienced colleagues. This strategy fosters peer learning and continuous improvement through collaborative relationships.
- Coaching: Principals from SCH04 and SCH05 highlighted coaching as a tool to refine instructional techniques. Coaching involves regular, focused feedback and professional dialogue aimed at improving specific teaching skills, suggesting a personalized approach to teacher development.
- Provision of Resources: In SCH05 and SCH07, principals emphasized providing resources such as instructional materials, teaching aids, or access to relevant training sessions. This suggests that access to adequate tools is considered crucial for improving instructional practices.

- **Demonstration Lessons:** One principal (SCH03) mentioned the use of demonstration lessons, where model teaching practices are showcased for other teachers. This hands-on approach allows teachers to observe effective teaching methods in real-time, providing concrete examples for them to emulate in their classrooms.

Q8: How do you monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in your school?

All seven principals have established systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The following strategies were consistently highlighted across the responses:

- **Teacher Preparation and Lesson Plans:** Teachers are required to prepare and submit lesson plans regularly. These are reviewed to ensure alignment with the curriculum and teaching objectives.
- **Weekly Walkthroughs:** Principals or senior teachers/vice principals conduct weekly walkthroughs of classrooms to observe the implementation of lessons, student engagement, and classroom management.
- **Lesson Observation and Feedback:** Formal lesson observations are conducted, followed by constructive feedback sessions to help teachers refine their instructional methods.
- **Teacher Appraisals:** Annual teacher appraisals assess overall performance, including teaching effectiveness, subject knowledge, and adherence to curriculum requirements.
- **Lesson Logs:** The Senior Management Team (SMT) completes lesson logs that document the progress of lesson plans. These logs are used to track curriculum coverage and submission compliance.
- **Support from Senior Teachers:** Senior teachers play an active role in mentoring and supporting less experienced teachers through coaching and collaborative planning.

- Student Academic Achievement: Principals also assess the effectiveness of teaching by reviewing student academic outcomes, using performance data to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Q9 (a) What are some of the main challenges you face in implementing instructional leadership strategies? (b) How do you address these challenges?

The principals identified several key challenges in the implementation of instructional leadership strategies. These include:

- Lack of Teaching Resources: Principals reported that a lack of teaching materials many times impact the effectiveness of their instructional leadership practices. To address this, principals stated that in some cases, resources are shared where possible. Parents are also asked to purchase. Additionally, partnerships with external stakeholders are explored to supplement school resources.
- Administrative Workload Limiting Time for Instructional Supervision: All seven principals mentioned the heavy administrative responsibilities that often restrict their ability to engage in crucial instructional leadership tasks like classroom walkthroughs and lesson observations. Principals also highlighted the point that as primary schools their access to clerical support staff is limited due to the size and grade level of the school. SCH01, SCHO3, SCHO7 also emphasized that they perform the roles of the schools accountant, secretary, plant manager among other duties. All principals noted that some administrative tasks are delegated to senior teachers and other competent staff, allowing the principals to prioritize instructional supervision.
- Limited Financial Resources: This prevent schools from addressing various needs, such as investing in new technology, providing professional development opportunities, and responding to requests from staff. In order to complement the funding providing by the Ministry of Education and Youth principals reportedly generate funds through donors, grants, alumni support and fundraising activities.

- Teachers' Resistance to Change: Resistance to new teaching methods or policies can slow down the implementation of modern instructional practices, leading to stagnation in teaching quality. Resistance is reportedly addressed through communication with staff and professional development sessions.
- Inadequate ICT Resources: With the growing reliance on technology for effective teaching, schools lacking ICT infrastructure struggle to deliver quality education, especially in the digital era. Schools are focusing on acquiring ICT resources through the Ministry of Education, e-Learning Jamaica, and donors. Additionally, prioritizing budget allocations to improve internet connectivity and digital resources was highlighted by four of the seven principals.
- Competency of New Teachers: Newly qualified teachers may lack the experience and practical skills needed to effectively manage classrooms or deliver lessons according to school standards. Schools have implemented mentorship programme, pairing of new teachers with experienced teachers who can provide guidance and feedback. Continuous professional development workshops are offered to build teaching competencies, while ongoing observation and feedback cycles ensure that new teachers receive the support needed to improve their instructional techniques.

Q10: Looking back, what do you consider your most significant achievement as a principal in terms of instructional leadership?

The principals identified several key achievements in their tenure, reflecting diverse aspects of instructional leadership. These accomplishments highlight their ability to lead their schools toward improved performance, expanded opportunities, and more cohesive staff environments.

- Improved National Education Inspectorate Ratings (SCH05 & SCH07): Two principal highlighted their efforts in turning around their school's rating from "unsatisfactory" to "satisfactory according to the National Education Inspectorate

(NEI) report. This reflects a comprehensive improvement in the quality of teaching, learning, and school leadership and management

- School Expansion to Include an Infant Department (SCH02 & SCH07): The expansion of schools to include an infant department demonstrates leadership in broadening the educational scope and catering to early childhood education. This decision is particularly impactful, as early childhood education lays the foundation for long-term student success.
- Significant Increase in Student Enrolment: All seven principals cited a significant increase in student enrollment as a notable achievement. This growth is often an indicator of enhanced school reputation, improved instructional quality, and stronger community engagement.
- Improved Placement of Students in Traditional High Schools via PEP (SCH03, SCH04, SCH05): Three principals emphasized the achievement of more students being placed in traditional high schools through the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) examinations. This demonstrates effective instructional leadership in preparing students for key academic milestones.
- Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy: All seven principals cited improvements in students' literacy and numeracy performance as a key achievement. However, they acknowledged that the gains have not been consistent over the years, and performance is still below the desired level.
- Enhanced Staff Cohesion (SCH05): One principal mentioned a notable improvement in staff cohesion, highlighting that when he first became principal, much time was spent addressing interpersonal conflicts among staff. Now, the staff works more harmoniously together, which directly impacts the school's instructional culture.

Q11: Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a principal or about instructional leadership that we haven't covered?

The principals offered additional insights into their experiences with instructional leadership, highlighting both the rewards and ongoing challenges:

- *Collaboration with Stakeholders Enhances Success*

Principals emphasized that successful instructional leadership is highly dependent on the collaboration and support of key stakeholders, including the School Management Team (SMT), School Board, and the Ministry of Education (MoEY). When these groups work together effectively, the results can be highly rewarding, particularly when students excel in their academic performance. This underscores the importance of shared leadership and collective responsibility in driving school improvement.

- *NCEL Course in Instructional Leadership*

Principals noted the positive impact of the National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL) course on instructional leadership. They described it as beneficial for developing the skills needed to guide teachers, improve school management, and foster student achievement. This highlights the role of professional development programs in enhancing leadership capacity and equipping principals with the tools to effectively lead instructional improvement.

- *Inadequate Infrastructure for 21st-Century Learning*

A critical area raised by the principals is the outdated infrastructure in many schools. Most school buildings were constructed before the 21st century and do not meet the needs of modern learning environments. Principals pointed out that infrastructure is a vital component of instructional leadership, as it directly affects the learning experience. To support 21st-century learning, the MoEY must prioritize upgrading school facilities, ensuring that classrooms are conducive to modern pedagogical approaches and technology integration.

- *Poor Ventilation and Classroom Conditions*

Many classrooms are poorly ventilated and uncomfortably hot, which negatively impacts both student learning and teacher performance. Principals highlighted the need for infrastructural improvements, as the physical environment is closely tied to cognitive performance and well-being. Addressing these issues would enhance the teaching and learning process, improving overall academic outcomes.

- *Additional Resources for Early Grades*

Principals stressed the importance of additional resources for the lower grades, particularly caregivers and teacher assistants for Grades 1, 2, and 3. They noted that establishing a strong academic foundation in the early years is essential for students' long-term success. Principals suggested that if early-grade students receive adequate support, it would lead to better performance in higher grades, ultimately improving the school's overall achievement. This reflects the need for targeted interventions at the foundational level to strengthen the entire education system.

- *Balancing Administrative and Instructional Leadership Responsibilities*

A recurring concern is the amount of time principals spend on administrative duties, which often detracts from their focus on instructional leadership. While administrative tasks are necessary, principals expressed the need for a more balanced workload that allows them to engage more fully in instructional supervision, teacher development, and student achievement initiatives. This challenge highlights the need for role clarification and possibly the delegation of administrative tasks to free up principals to concentrate on their core function—leading instruction.

Data collected from teacher survey (Likert 5-point scale)

Table 12: Principals Instructional Leadership Practices

ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	σ	Decision
The Principal set clear instructional goals	3 (14.3%)	14 (66.7%)	1 (4.8%)	3 (14.3%)	-	3.81	0.87	Low Perception
The Principal regularly observes classroom teaching.	-	14 (67%)	-	7 (33%)	-	3.67	0.48	Low Perception
The Principal provides constructive feedback to teachers	6 (28.5%)	8 (38%)	2 (9.5%)	5 (24%)	-	3.71	1.15	Low Perception
The Principal encourages professional development for teachers	9 (43%)	12 (57%)	-	-	-	4.43	0.51	High Perception
The Principal involves teachers in decision-making processes	3 (14.3%)	13 (61.9%)	1 (4.8%)	4 (19%)	-	3.71	0.96	Low Perception
The Principal fosters a	2 (9.5%)	11 (52.4%)	2 (9.5%)	4 (19%)	2 (9.5%)	3.33	1.20	Low Perception

collaborative school culture								
The Principal uses data to inform instructional decision	7 (33.3%)	14 (66.7%)	-	-	-	4.33	0.48	High Perception
The principal sets high expectations for student achievement.	8 (38.1%)	12 (57.1%)	1 (4.8%)	-	-	4.33	0.58	High Perception

SA= Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N-Neutral; D = Disagree; SA = Strongly Disagree

Weighted average =3.92

The weighted average score of 3.92 reflects a moderate perception of the principal's instructional leadership practices, with notable strengths and areas for improvement in various leadership dimensions.

Strengths (High Perception Areas):

The principal is viewed as highly effective in Encouraging Professional Development and Setting High Expectations for Student Achievement. According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), effective instructional leaders foster environments that prioritize teacher development and hold high expectations for all students, which are essential components of enhancing instructional quality and student success. By promoting professional development, the principal supports teachers in acquiring the skills necessary for effective teaching, aligning with Hallinger's (2003) framework, which emphasizes the principal's role in creating opportunities for teacher learning. Additionally, the principal's use of Data to Inform Instructional Decisions showcases an evidence-based approach to leadership. This practice aligns with Robinson's (2011) research, which underscores the importance of data-driven decision-making in achieving effective school improvement and responsive support systems for both teachers and students.

Areas for Improvement (Low Perception Areas):

The principal received lower perception scores in Setting Clear Instructional Goals, Classroom Observations, Constructive Feedback, Teacher Involvement in Decision-Making, and Collaborative Culture. Instructional leadership theory, as articulated by Spillane (2005), highlights the importance of clear goals and a collaborative approach, where principals actively engage teachers in instructional decision-making. The absence of well-defined instructional goals can lead to fragmented efforts, making it challenging to meet academic targets effectively. Furthermore, classroom observation and constructive feedback are crucial for enhancing teaching practices, as they allow for ongoing teacher reflection and instructional refinement (Blase & Blase, 2000). Without these elements, instructional gaps may go unaddressed, which can hinder overall student performance. Moreover, fostering a collaborative culture and involving teachers in decision-making enhances buy-in and shared commitment to school goals, both of which are essential for sustained improvement (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

The overall weighted average of 3.92 indicates that while the principal demonstrates effectiveness in several areas, there is room for growth in key dimensions of instructional leadership. The strengths in promoting professional development and data-informed decision-making suggest that the principal has a solid foundation for impacting teacher performance and student outcomes positively. However, research by Leithwood et al. (2020) suggests that a more comprehensive approach—including regular classroom observations, clearer instructional goals, and a more collaborative culture—can significantly bolster the principal's impact on instructional quality.

By addressing these areas for improvement, the principal could enhance their overall effectiveness and foster an environment that is more conducive to student achievement. As Robinson (2011) posits, principals who engage in these core instructional practices not only support teacher growth but also contribute to a school culture where instructional goals are clearly communicated, and teachers feel empowered. This alignment of leadership practices with instructional goals can lead to greater teacher satisfaction, more cohesive instructional strategies, and ultimately, improved student outcomes.

Table 13: Principals Effectiveness

ITEMS	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	σ	Decision
The principal effectively communicates the school's vision and goals	2 (9.5%)	17 (81%)	1 (4.8%)			4.05	0.38	High Perception
The principal demonstrates strong leadership skills	1 (4.8%)	13 (62%)	4 (19%)	3 (14.2%)		3.57	0.81	Low Perception
The principal effectively manages school resources	9 (42.9%)	12 (57.1%)				4.43	0.51	High Perception
The principal maintains a positive school climate		16 (76.2%)	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.2%)		3.62	0.74	Low Perception
The principal effectively addresses student disciplinary issues		14 (66.7%)	6 (28.6%)	1 (4.8%)		3.29	1.06	Low Perception
The principal fosters strong	11 (52.4%)	10 (47.6%)				4.52	0.51	High Perception

relationships with the community								
The principal supports teacher collaboration and teamwork	1 (4.8%)	19 (90.5%)	1 (4.8%)			4.00	0.32	Low Perception
The principal promotes continuous improvement and innovation	6 (28.6%)	14 (66.7%)	1 (4.8%)			4.24	0.54	High Perception
The principal supports the use of effective teaching strategies.	3 (14.3%)	18 (85.7%)				4.14	0.36	High Perception
The principal ensures that resources are available for instructional improvement	1 (4.8%)	18 (85.7%)		2 (9.5%)		4.33	0.91	High Perception

SA= Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N-Neutral; D = Disagree; SA = Strongly Disagree

Weighted Average: 4.02

The data suggests a mixed view of the principal's effectiveness, with stronger perceptions in areas like resource management, community relations, and support for effective teaching strategies. These areas align well with instructional leadership theory, which emphasizes the principal's role in organizing resources and building relationships that directly support teaching and learning outcomes (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Higher perceptions in these domains

indicate the principal's ability to facilitate a learning environment where resources are effectively allocated, and the community is engaged in the school's mission, which can lead to improved student outcomes.

However, the principal received lower scores in leadership skills, school climate, disciplinary practices, and teacher collaboration. This aspect is crucial, as instructional leadership theory posits that a principal's ability to create a positive school climate and promote teacher collaboration directly impacts instructional quality and, by extension, student achievement (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020). Weaknesses in these areas suggest challenges in fostering a cohesive school culture, which could hinder the realization of the school's educational goals. Specifically, the low perception of leadership skills may reflect the principal's struggles with motivating staff and cultivating a sense of shared purpose.

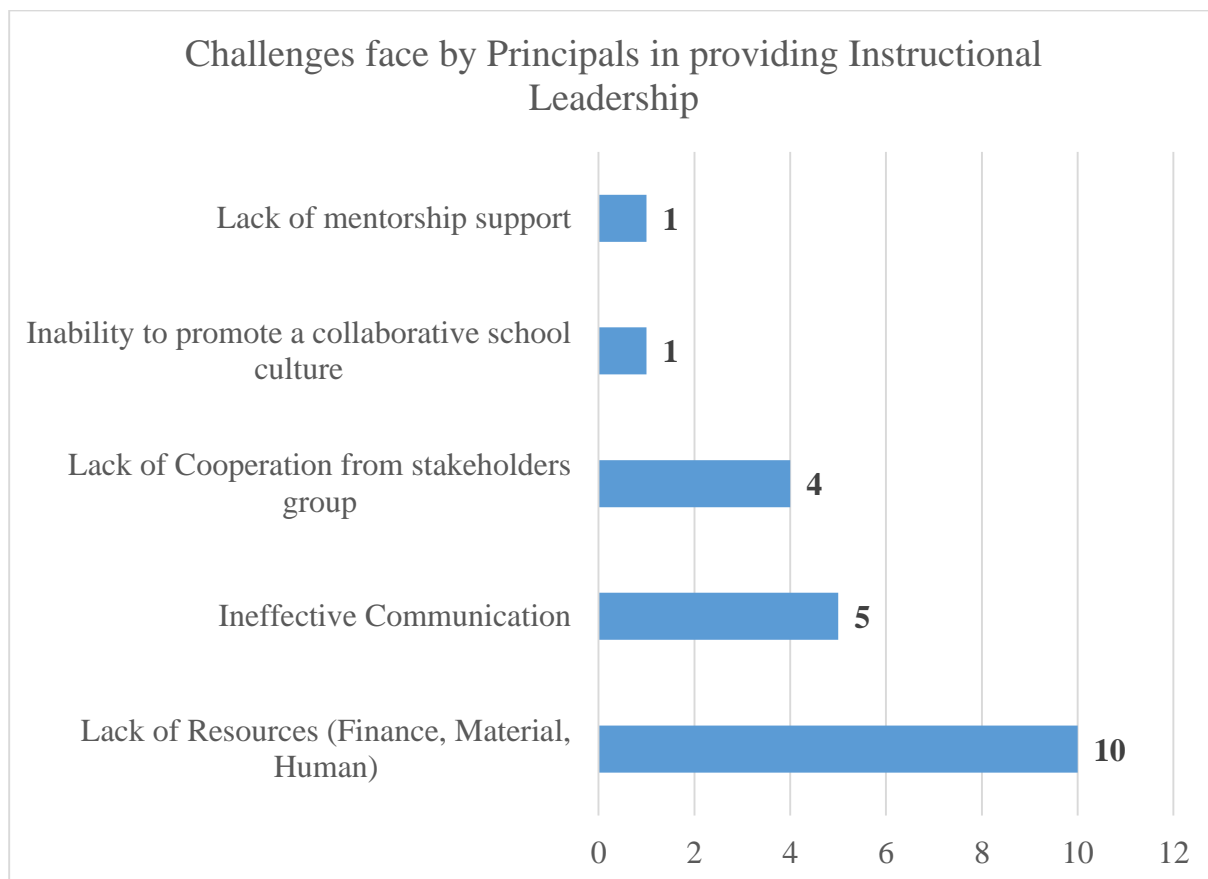
These gaps indicate the need for targeted professional development to strengthen the principal's leadership skills and ability to cultivate a supportive school climate. According to Spillane (2005), a distributed approach to leadership, where the principal actively engages teachers and staff as partners, could enhance teacher collaboration and, ultimately, instructional effectiveness. By developing these lower-rated competencies, the principal may better engage staff in collaborative efforts, address disciplinary issues, and foster a more positive and productive school climate.

Improving these areas could result in a positive shift in future evaluations, with a more balanced perception of the principal's effectiveness across all leadership domains. This approach aligns with the work of Robinson (2011), who emphasizes that principals who engage in ongoing professional development and leadership training are better positioned to make informed decisions that improve instructional practices and student performance. By focusing on these areas of development, the school may see substantial gains in both teacher effectiveness and student outcomes, leading to a higher weighted average in principal evaluations.

Open-ended Survey Questions

Q1: What are the most significant challenges your principal faces in providing instructional leadership?

Figure 9: Barriers to Instructional Leadership



Of the 21 teachers surveyed, 10 (48%) identified a lack of resources as the primary challenge for principals in providing effective instructional leadership. This finding aligns with the challenges reported by principals themselves, who also highlighted inadequate teaching materials, ICT resources, and limited financial support. Additionally, five teachers pointed to ineffective communication as a significant issue, while four mentioned insufficient support from various stakeholder groups as another major barrier

Q2: How does your principal's instructional leadership impact teacher performance and motivation?

The dominant themes from participants were that effective instructional leadership significantly influences teacher performance and motivation by providing clear direction, setting high standards, and modelling expected behaviours. When principals actively communicate their instructional goals and develop well-defined plans, teachers better understand their roles and

responsibilities, enhancing their motivation and confidence. Effective instructional leaders also demonstrate the behaviours they expect from their staff, establishing a professional example that inspires teachers to strive for excellence. This modelling fosters a supportive environment where teachers feel valued and encouraged to improve their instructional practices. As a result, motivated teachers are more likely to perform well, which ultimately contributes to improved student achievement and overall school effectiveness.

Q3: How has your principal's instructional leadership impacted student achievement in your school?

All respondents indicated that the principal's instructional leadership has positively impacted student achievement. According to data from the twenty-one teachers surveyed, the principal regularly establishes specific achievement goals that serve as benchmarks for students and teachers, fostering a culture of accountability and high expectations. Additionally, by implementing incentive programs such as the principal honour roll and providing scholarships for students, the principal motivates students to reach these targets, encouraging them to engage more actively in their learning. The responses also suggest that though resources are limited, the principal provides teachers with ongoing guidance and resources to help them meet the set targets/objectives, which has led to improved teaching strategies and better student outcomes. This targeted and supportive leadership approach contributes directly to higher levels of student achievement across the school.

Q4: What recommendations do you have for improving instructional leadership in your school?

The participants in responding to the question indicated that to improve instructional leadership in the schools, it is essential to advocate for more robust support from the Ministry of Education, specifically by lobbying for increased access to high-quality teaching resources. Additionally, creating a more inclusive environment where staff input is actively sought and valued would strengthen leadership and foster a sense of shared purpose. Establishing clear and consistent communication channels would enhance transparency and ensure everyone understands the school's vision and goals. Promoting a collaborative culture by engaging all stakeholders—teachers, parents, and community members—would further reinforce this vision, as everyone would have a vested interest in achieving common objectives. Empowering teachers through professional development and leadership opportunities would also enhance instructional

quality, while operating with greater transparency in decision-making would build trust and accountability across the school community.

Participants were given the opportunity to provide additional comments on areas they felt were important. Eighteen out of the twenty-one teachers offered their insights, while three did not provide any additional input. The majority of respondents emphasized the need for principals to dedicate more time to instructional supervision, which they believe would lead to enhanced student achievement. Furthermore, many participants highlighted the importance of fostering collaboration and including stakeholders in decision-making processes, as well as setting clear instructional goals to ensure alignment and focus across the school

Chapter 5

Discussions: Implications and Recommendations

Introduction

Instructional leadership supports the development of teaching and learning and is closely connected to improving students' learning. In primary education, instructional leadership is a key factor that influences both principal effectiveness and student achievement. Principals in Jamaican schools are crucial to fostering teacher development and shaping instructional practices to achieve educational goals. The researcher used various data, documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews, and surveys to explore how instructional leadership impacts principals' effectiveness and students' achievement.

Implications

School Improvement Plans (SIPs)

Examining SIPs reveals how primary schools in Jamaica align their objectives with the Ministry of Education and Youth's (MoEY) goals. The data showed that a strong alignment with MoEY priorities does not guarantee SIP approval, as in the case of SCHO2, SCHO5, and SCH07. Quality and comprehensiveness in SIPs are crucial for approval, which subsequently supports principal effectiveness and student achievement. Schools that did not meet the 81% threshold likely lack focus on curriculum enhancement, teacher development, and resource management, indicating that alignment with MoEY objectives must be complemented by detailed and well-structured plans addressing key instructional needs.

Principals Appraisals

The appraisal of instructional leadership among principals indicates a direct correlation between effective leadership and the success of SIPs. Principals who score higher in instructional leadership are more successful in aligning school goals with MoEY's strategic objectives, contributing to academic success. Conversely, principals with satisfactory ratings may lack the skills necessary to create high-quality SIPs, suggesting that robust instructional leadership is essential for cultivating a positive school culture and aligning improvement plans with broader educational goals.

Professional Development for Instructional Leadership

The data indicates a troubling lack of engagement in professional development (PD) focused on instructional leadership among principals and teachers. Research by Leithwood et al. (2004) emphasizes that instructional leadership is vital for student outcomes, yet low participation in IL-focused PD sessions reveals a gap that may hinder the establishment of a continuous improvement culture. Hallinger and Heck (1998) also underscore that inadequate training can compromise principals' effectiveness in promoting instructional goals, which can subsequently affect student performance.

Student Performance and Instructional Leadership

An analysis of student achievement across Grades 4, 5, and 6 in Mathematics and Language Arts highlights areas needing attention in instructional leadership. Effective leadership, as indicated by Leithwood et al. (2004), fosters student success, yet the low levels of Highly Proficient ratings point to gaps in instructional leadership that affect learning outcomes. High numbers of students at the Beginning level, especially in Grade 5 Mathematics, reflect challenges in foundational skills. The underrepresentation of Highly Proficient students suggests that principals may not be adequately addressing the instructional strategies to support advanced learners.

Curriculum Implementation Teams (CITs)

The frequency of Curriculum Implementation Team (CIT) meetings illustrates the positive impact of curriculum-focused collaboration on instructional leadership. Spillane et al. (2004) argue that regular instructional discussions enhance curriculum implementation. A correlation exists between frequent CIT meetings and higher appraisal ratings, suggesting that principals who leverage these teams improve their instructional leadership. Schools with fewer CIT meetings may not be maximizing this resource, potentially limiting instructional improvements and the effectiveness of their SIPs.

Inspection Report on Instructional Leadership and Academic Performance

The relationship between instructional leadership and student achievement is multifaceted. Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) emphasize that while leadership is crucial for school success, it must be coupled with resources and effective teaching. The data reveal that schools with "Strong" or "Satisfactory" leadership do not consistently achieve high performance in core subjects like English and Mathematics. As Fullan (2007) notes, leadership alone is insufficient; systemic factors such as curriculum support, teacher quality, and resources also play a critical role in achieving academic success.

Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews provide deeper insights into how principals implement instructional leadership. Principals describe using strategic planning, continuous monitoring, and PD to drive student outcomes. Challenges such as limited resources, heavy administrative workload, and resistance to change emerge as barriers to fully realizing instructional leadership goals. Principals' emphasis on vision communication fosters a unified school culture, and collaborative practices like walkthroughs and coaching demonstrate that instructional leadership is a collective effort involving the entire school community.

Teacher Survey

The teacher survey highlights strengths in professional development, high expectations, and data-driven decision-making but reveals challenges in setting instructional goals, classroom observation, and collaborative culture. Spillane (2005) argues that effective instructional leadership requires clearly defined goals and a collaborative approach. The absence of structured goals could lead to inconsistencies in instructional practices, potentially affecting efforts to meet academic targets. Blase and Blase (2000) emphasize that classroom observation and feedback are crucial for instructional improvement, which appears to be an area needing attention.

Recommendations

Instructional leadership focuses on the principal's role in leading curriculum and pedagogy as areas that directly affect student achievement. According to John Maxwell, everything rises and falls with leadership. Therefore, effective leadership is a vital component of a successful school. Focusing on instructional leadership will ensure that students are successful and that teaching and learning are prioritized. In completing the research exploring instructional leadership's impact on principals' effectiveness and students' achievement, the following are being recommended:

1. **Strengthen School Improvement Plans:**

A study on school effectiveness identified the School Improvement Plan (SIP) as a critical component shared by all successful schools (Hobbs, 2015). While SIPs are generally structured to align with specific Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY) objectives, they often lack the level of detail needed to address curriculum implementation, assessment practices, and teacher development comprehensively. Enhancing SIPs requires moving beyond mere compliance with MoEY guidelines; it calls for incorporating actionable strategies that effectively support instructional leadership and drive school improvement. In Jamaica, SIPs serve as foundational documents that define a school's vision, objectives, and targeted strategies, supported by the Instructional Leadership Framework 2.0. By aligning SIPs closely with MoEY goals and embedding specific strategies for curriculum interventions, schools can ensure that improvement efforts directly address instructional gaps and positively impact student achievement. Given the SIP's role in guiding school operations, MoEY should require that all school leaders have their SIPs approved before implementation to guarantee alignment with national education priorities.

2. Enhance CIT Role:

The Curriculum Implementation Team (CIT) in Jamaica was first introduced in 2000 to oversee and improve curriculum implementation in primary schools. In 2014, the Ministry of Education and Youth mandated all public schools to establish CITs to provide leadership, guidance, and support to administrators and teachers in curriculum-related matters. These teams play a pivotal role by assessing learning gaps through needs analyses and implementing strategies to address them, including resource allocation, scheduling, and classroom management. Inconsistent curriculum delivery has been an issue in Jamaican primary schools, particularly in mathematics and language arts, where gaps can hinder student progress. Strengthening CITs allows schools to proactively identify instructional gaps, helping to maintain alignment with national standards and creating opportunities for early intervention.

Increasing the frequency and focus of their meetings is recommended to improve CIT effectiveness. Currently, meetings often lack the structure needed to drive impactful changes in instructional practices. Scheduling regular bi-weekly or monthly CIT meetings would foster consistent collaboration among educators, enabling timely responses to curriculum challenges and adjustments to teaching methods. It is also suggested that the Ministry of Education and Youth provide schools with structured agendas focused on curriculum review, performance data analysis, and instructional planning. Such structured, frequent meetings would empower principals and teachers to collaboratively address gaps in student achievement and implement evidence-based strategies, fostering a culture of continuous professional development and ultimately enhancing student outcomes in the primary education system.

3. Continuous Professional Development:

In the Jamaican education system, ongoing professional development (PD) for principals and teachers is essential for strengthening instructional leadership, which leads to better student outcomes. Education's evolving demands require school leaders to continuously update their knowledge of pedagogical strategies, technology, and educational standards. Principals, in particular, benefit from PD as it refines their leadership skills, enabling them to support teachers, set academic goals, and create a conducive learning environment for student achievement.

To enhance instructional leadership, the Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY) should implement PD programs specifically tailored to these competencies. Such programs could empower principals to make data-driven decisions, foster a culture of continuous improvement, and address learning gaps proactively. Training in curriculum management, classroom observation, feedback, and data analysis would help principals improve instructional quality across their schools. A structured, recurring PD framework, ideally led by the National College of Educational Leadership (NCEL), would ensure that Jamaican school leaders remain equipped to tackle current educational challenges, ultimately improving school effectiveness and long-term student success.

4. Investment in Infrastructure

The Ministry of Education and Youth should invest in upgrading the infrastructure resource of the primary schools. Modern 21st-century classrooms are designed to support collaborative, technology-driven, and flexible learning environments. In Jamaica, however, outdated infrastructure often results in inadequate ventilation, poor lighting, and limited access to digital tools, and rigid layouts that hinder the dynamic, interactive learning approaches necessary for today's educational standards. These issues restrict principals from implementing instructional practices that align with 21st-century learning demands and ultimately constraint students' engagement and achievement.

An infrastructure upgrade would involve creating adaptable classroom spaces equipped with advanced technological resources, such as smart boards, projectors, and high-speed internet. Such upgrades would support collaborative learning, encourage critical thinking, and offer hands-on, technology-enriched lessons, aligning with instructional leadership goals. By enabling modern learning strategies, infrastructure improvements empower principals to lead effectively, fostering an educational environment where teachers can innovate, and students can thrive.

5. Resource Allocation and Support:

Addressing the persistent shortages in teaching materials and ICT infrastructure is critical to enhancing instructional quality and student outcomes. To tackle these issues, the Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY) should prioritize the allocation of resources to schools that face significant gaps in these areas. Access to adequate teaching materials—such as textbooks, lab equipment, and other instructional resources—is essential for delivering an engaging and effective curriculum. Similarly, ICT infrastructure, including computers, tablets, and reliable internet access, has become increasingly important as schools aim to integrate technology into their instructional practices. By improving resource allocation, particularly to underserved schools, the MoEY can help bridge existing inequities and ensure that all students have access to the tools they need to succeed.

Jamaican schools should also explore partnerships with private sector organizations, non-profits, and community groups to supplement resources. Collaborating with these stakeholders can provide schools with alternative avenues for acquiring needed materials and technology. For example, partnerships with technology firms could facilitate donations of ICT equipment, while local businesses might contribute funds for school supplies or sponsor specific educational programs. By actively seeking external support, schools can create a more resource-rich environment, enabling teachers to implement innovative instructional strategies and better support student learning across all areas of the curriculum.

6. Improving School Climate:

Improving school climate through the establishment of a collaborative culture is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of instructional leadership. A positive school climate characterized by trust, respect, and open communication lays the foundation for a supportive and productive learning environment. School leaders can foster this by promoting teamwork among teachers, encouraging shared decision-making, and valuing the contributions of all staff members. By creating a space where educators feel respected and involved in school-wide initiatives, principals can cultivate a sense of belonging and shared responsibility, which, according to Harris and Hopkins (2019), has been linked to increased teacher morale and retention. Furthermore, a collaborative school culture supports the consistent implementation of instructional practices, as teachers are more likely to engage in continuous professional dialogue, share best practices, and collectively problem-solve. This cohesion among staff members can ultimately lead to more effective instructional strategies, benefiting students across the board.

In addition to fostering collaboration within the school, engaging with external stakeholders such as parents, community leaders, and local organizations can significantly enhance the overall school climate. When these stakeholders are actively involved in the school improvement process, they bring diverse perspectives and resources that can help address specific challenges and reinforce the school's goals. For example, engaging parents in school activities and decision-making can lead to stronger home-school connections, which are shown to positively influence student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2020). Additionally, partnerships with local organizations can provide valuable resources and support for school programs. In the Jamaican context, this may involve working with community groups to support after-school programs or securing resources through local businesses to improve facilities. By fostering strong relationships with these stakeholders, school leaders can build a more resilient and responsive school community, enhancing the school's capacity to meet its students' evolving needs and fulfil its educational mission.

7. Communication and Goal Setting:

Setting clear and measurable instructional goals is essential for aligning school activities with broader educational objectives. By defining specific goals, principals can provide a shared vision that guides both teachers and students toward targeted outcomes. These goals should be aligned with national standards set by the Ministry of Education and Youth (MoEY) while also addressing the unique needs of each school community. For instance, setting goals around literacy improvement or enhancing numeracy skills can help focus efforts on areas where Jamaican students typically face challenges. According to Spillane (2005), well-defined instructional goals promote cohesion within the school and give staff members a clear understanding of their roles in the achievement process. This clarity not only motivates teachers to work toward common objectives but also enables them to tailor their instructional practices to meet specific targets, thus improving the overall quality of teaching and learning.

Effective communication channels are equally vital to ensure that these instructional goals are well understood and that progress is consistently tracked and shared. In a Jamaican school setting, principals can establish regular staff meetings, workshops, and feedback sessions to discuss goal progress and make necessary adjustments. Transparent communication fosters a collaborative atmosphere where teachers feel informed and supported in their efforts to achieve set goals. Additionally, creating open lines of communication with students and parents can enhance community involvement and accountability. As research by Leithwood and Riehl (2003) suggests, regular updates and inclusive dialogue can boost trust and engagement, thereby strengthening the school community's commitment to achieving instructional goals. By fostering a culture of open communication and clearly defined objectives, Jamaican schools can ensure that all stakeholders are aligned and actively contributing to the educational mission.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The findings of this study emphasize the transformative impact of instructional leadership on principal effectiveness and student achievement in Jamaican primary schools. Principals who demonstrate strong instructional leadership are better equipped to develop and implement School Improvement Plans (SIPs) that align with the Ministry of Education and Youth's (MoEY) objectives and directly address their schools' instructional needs. The TREND target of achieving 90% proficiency in core subjects at the primary level, including Mathematics and Language, by 2031 is ambitious yet attainable if principals are empowered to lead effectively. The strong correlation between principal appraisal ratings, the successful approval of School Improvement Plans (SIPs), and student outcomes underscores the necessity of strengthening instructional leadership practices to meet these national objectives.

This research answers the first research question by revealing that instructional leadership, as perceived by principals, significantly influences their ability to support teacher development and instructional practices. Principals reported that initiatives such as Curriculum Implementation Team (CIT) meetings, data-driven decision-making, and targeted professional development (PD) have empowered teachers to refine their instructional techniques and align their efforts with school goals. However, findings also show that systemic barriers such as limited resources and administrative burdens hamper the full realization of these leadership practices, presenting challenges that need urgent attention. Addressing these issues through enhanced training and infrastructural support will enable principals to focus more effectively on their instructional leadership roles.

Regarding the second research question, the study establishes a clear link between principals' instructional leadership practices and student academic achievement. Schools with frequent CIT meetings and strong SIP implementation showed higher levels of student performance. The low representation of students achieving Highly Proficient ratings in the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) exams signals the need for targeted interventions to strengthen foundational skills. By equipping principals and teachers with curriculum design and instructional planning skills, schools can foster environments conducive to higher academic performance, directly supporting the TREND 2031 goals of ninety-two percent literacy, which aligns with the 2030 vision of increasing and maintaining literacy and numeracy rate.

The third research question highlights perceived challenges faced by primary school principals in implementing effective instructional leadership practices. Interviews revealed that resource constraints, inadequate professional development opportunities, and competing administrative demands hinder principals' ability to focus on instructional priorities. The Ministry of Education and Youth commissioned Patterson Report (2021) also supported these barriers revealed in this research. Addressing these gaps through systemic support and targeted interventions such as professional learning communities, collaborative leadership models, and expanded resource allocation will enhance principals' capacity to lead effectively.

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical role of instructional leadership in driving educational outcomes in Jamaica's primary schools. Achieving the MoEY's TREND goal of 90% proficiency for core subjects by 2031 will require concerted efforts to enhance principals' instructional leadership skills, address systemic barriers, and foster collaboration among school stakeholders. Jamaican primary schools can create a culture of instructional excellence by prioritizing professional development, improving resource availability, and streamlining administrative demands. This holistic approach will empower principals to lead with impact, enabling them to guide their schools toward achieving national educational goals and fostering sustainable improvements in student achievement.

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