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New Primary School Principals' Understandings and Practice of Instructional Leadership in Ethiopia

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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MEd, Makerere University, Kampala, 2000

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the award of the

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Abstract

Instructional leadership (IL) is recognized as an essential role of a school principal, yet in the African school context, there is a paucity of research on understanding new principals' perceptions and practice of IL. This basic qualitative research explored the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understandings of teacher support for effective instruction. The study utilized the Practical Ideal Type (PIT) microconceptual framework to gauge what new principals understood and practiced and compared with what is established in literature in the Principal's Instructional Management Rating Scale model. Using thematic data analysis, interview data of seven new primary school principals were coded, categorized, themed and interpreted. Results indicate that new principals understand IL from the perspective of only two dimensions of managing the instructional program and developing the school learning environment. A gap in the principals' understanding of the dimension of defining the school mission including practices on framing and communicating school goals was evident. The study concludes that new principals (a) value the focus on students learning, (b) account for teacher performance, (c) monitor and implement school plans, (d) build relationships, (d) account for teaching and learning in the classroom, (f) engender collegiality and collaboration, (g) establish teacher support strategies, and (h) follow district guidelines. The findings will benefit school principals as practitioners, regional and district education leaders and policy makers as the support system for effective school leadership and providers of Continuous Profession Development, and School Leadership Training Institutions for designing effective and need responsive leadership program.

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Dedication

I dedicate this body of work to my parents Josper and Helen Angura whose words of encouragement to study as a girl child continue to push me forward. My daughters Helen Peace F Elemu and Hannah Daniela Micubanga Oyang who have been my best cheerleaders throughout my doctoral studies reminding me that the reward is completing the journey no matter how hard it becomes along the way.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In every education system, school leadership is an important role. It is a component of the school system, such as classroom teaching, that influences student learning and considerably influences school success (Leithwood, 2006; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2012; Zheng, Li, Chen, & Loeb, 2017). Schools and school leaders face expanded roles and responsibilities resulting in changes in expectations for school principals (Ng & Szeto, 2016; OECD, 2012). The purpose of this study was to explore the Instructional Leadership (IL) understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understanding of how to support teachers to be more effective instructors. As the trends in many countries look to school leadership models appropriate for current and future educational environments, understanding what new school principals know, understand, and practice in terms of IL will be an important input to the discourse of effective school leadership. The various components of school leadership have over the recent times drawn scholars to examine and expand their knowledge base in educational leadership. In today's rapidly changing societies, effective school leadership is essential in enabling education systems to adapt (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008). According to Sisman (2016), instructional practices of principals are a reliable scale for measuring their IL behavior.

Accordingly, the implications for social change from this research include obtaining some understanding of new principals' needs on their role as instructional

leaders and potentially influencing the induction and mentoring programs for newly appointed principals. It will also contribute knowledge to the education leadership field.

In this chapter, I present an introduction describing the topic of study supported by background information that describes the scope and gap that I will attempt to address. I also articulate the problem statement sharing evidence on the currency of the problem and describe the purpose of the study. I include the research questions and a definition of the conceptual framework that will guide the study. In addition, I cover the nature of the study, and I define key concepts and constructs in the study. Further, I identify assumptions that are critical to the study and describe the scope and delimitation of the study. I then conclude with the identification of the limitations and describe the significance of the study.

Background

A significant focus of education reforms today emphasizes the role of school leadership as an essential component to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling, improving student learning, adapting schools to changing external environments, and bridging school improvement and education reforms (OECD, 2012). Changes in expectations for schools and school leaders is resulting in expanded roles and responsibilities of school leaders (OECD, 2012). Because of the changing expectations of what school leaders should achieve the distribution of tasks, training and support must change making the routine jobs and working contexts of principals' complex and diverse (Zheng et al., 2017).

Increased accountability at the school level requires that principals have time and capacity to lead learning (Gavora, 2010; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). Knowledge and skills concerning curriculum, effective assessment, and pedagogical strategies are important for principals to be effective instructional leaders (Room 241 Team, 2018). However, instruction is commonly left to teachers with no support and guidance (Gumus & Akcaoglu, 2013). The assumption that improving the quality of education can be resolved by having a steady supply of motivated and well-paid teachers undermines the fact that classroom practice and leadership have a significant influence on student learning (Kremer, Brannen, & Glennerster, 2013; OECD, 2012). With less knowledge on the influence of new school principal's IL practices on their capacity to support teaching, there is a need to study what influences IL of new principals (Neumerski, 2013). Principals' lack of knowledge of instructional support activities, minimal time for instructional supervision, the little capacity to monitor the curriculum, and inability to create and nurture a safe learning and working environment all affect principals' ability to regularly undertake IL activities in school (Sisman, 2016).

Scholars in the field identify research gaps in this area including the need to investigate factors impacting IL, how it is conceived and demonstrated, and the possible existence of common IL practices (Kalman & Arslan, 2016; Ng, Nguyen, Whong, & Choy, 2015). Further, research on the role of leaders in schools is scanty in the developing world and even less on IL in Africa in the last 3 decades (Almarshad, 2017; Gumus, Bellibas, Esen, & Gumus, 2018). More specifically, the scarcity of research on new principals' understanding and practice of IL during their first 3 years of principalship

in a developing country context and a narrow comprehension of IL activities (Petrovic & Vracar, 2019). In this study, therefore, I add to knowledge in this area and generate information that could potentially be useful for principal training and professional development programs for school principals.

Problem Statement

The Ethiopian Education Service Delivery Indicator Survey states that only a quarter of teachers surveyed passed a pedagogy test, indicating that teachers require solid pedagogical knowledge and support from school principals to provide effective instruction (Zike & Ayele, 2015). IL became of interest in the last few decades for its focus on the leaders' role in instructional processes (Gumus et al., 2018). Leadership has been a focus in the developed societies of Europe, North America, and Australia and is now just beginning to be a focus in the African context with uneven distribution of studies across African societies (Bush, 2017; Hallinger, 2018). Hallinger (2018) and Qian, Walker and Li, (2017) observed that school contexts shape school leadership practice, hence leadership should be examined in context. Yet there is limited research conducted on the experiences and practices of new principals as they strive to establish IL in their schools in the African context (Almarshad, 2017; Gumus et al., 2018).

There is a gap in the research literature on the IL understandings and practices of new school principals in Ethiopia. It is unclear what new principals understand IL to be and what practices they undertake to implement IL at the beginning of their careers as principals. This gap in knowledge calls for research to explore new principals' understandings of IL and how to support teachers to be more effective instructors. The

knowledge gained through this study will enable educators, practitioners, and policy makers to develop policies and programs for effective preparation and orientation on IL of school principals in the African context.

Purpose of the Study

For this basic qualitative study, my purpose was to explore the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understanding of teacher support for effective instruction. I sought to identify what new principals understand their role to be and the challenges they encounter in practicing IL. The findings will contribute to the gap in the research literature on the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals. Essential to this study was the identification of self-reported experiences and practices that new primary school principals use to support teachers to provide effective classroom instruction.

Research Questions

1. RQ1: What are new school principals' understandings of instructional leadership in Ethiopia?
2. RQ2: How do new principals' practice instructional leadership?
3. RQ3: How do new principals support teachers to be more effective instructors?
4. RQ4: What challenges do new principals face in their role as instructional leaders?

Conceptual Framework for the Study

This study's conceptual framework followed a practical ideal type (PIT) microconceptual framework for IL based on the elements of IL found in the literature. The PIT framework provided for recommendations and assessment of strengths and weaknesses of IL as the selected phenomenon (Shields & Tajali, 2006) and allowed me to gauge the situation of IL of new principals establishing how the reality compares to the ideal and allowed gaps to be identified (Francois, 2004; Shields & Tajali, 2006). The term *practical* refers to the components of the phenomenon of IL standing as statements of expectation while the ideal is a position to be progressively achieved (Dewey, 1938; Kaplan, 1964). With the underlying principle of gauging what the new principals (NPs) understand and practice as IL and comparing with what is established in the literature as constituting IL, I used the characteristics of IL in the Principal's Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) model by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). This model was selected because of its established dimensions and functions of IL. It provided the structure upon which the role of NPs understandings and practice was mapped (Hallinger, Dongyu, & Wang, 2016; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Given the exploratory approach of this study, the conceptual framework also incorporated Bandura's construct of self-efficacy grounded in social cognitive theory (SCT). Bandura (1977) advanced that personal efficacy determines the initiation of coping behavior, the effort expended and for how long it can be sustained when faced with challenging or new situations. Personal efficacy can originate from accomplishments, indirect experiences, persuasion, and physiological states of an

individual (Bandura, 1977, 1994). Self-efficacy can also be verified by the interrelation between the behavior, environment, and the intellect of an individual (Artino, 2012; Gavora, 2010). The theory holds that a personal belief obtained from actual performance, observation of others, persuasion, and one's physiological and affective states are required to attain designated types of performances (Grant & Oslo, 2014).

The concept of self-efficacy guides the understanding that the initiation and persistence of coping behavior is determined by personal mastery (Bandura, 1994). The research questions seek to find out what experiences and practices new principals involve themselves as instructional leaders. I categorized the experiences of the new principals and related them to the self-efficacy levels described guiding the interpretation of the described practices and experiences with the underlying conviction that personal effectiveness affects the will to try and cope with given situations (Bandura, 1977). As a result, I identified some codes related to aspects of self-efficacy illustrated by the IL choices and practices of the NPs.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a basic qualitative study. According to Merriam (2009), the process of understanding how people perceive their lives and experiences is undertaking a basic qualitative research study. In education, an in-depth understanding of effective educational processes is better investigated through a basic qualitative study allowing for interpretation of and attribution of meaning to the experiences (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, this study on new principals' understandings and practices of IL is consistent with qualitative research approach.

The phenomenon that I investigated is what new principals understand IL to be and how they engage in IL. To develop a clear understanding of this phenomenon will require careful documentation using thick descriptions of the experiences shared and contextual factors. Ravitch and Carl (2016) asserted that thick description is important in a qualitative study as it allows for the contextual meaning of the findings to be revealed. I conducted individual in-depth interviews with seven principals to explore the participants' understandings of IL and what practices they engage in that demonstrate IL. The unit of analysis was the new school principals with not more than 3 years of experience as principals.

I obtained data through the responses of the principals to the interview questions. The concept of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) will support the construction of the meanings held by the participants' experiences from the perspectives of the participants themselves (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Personal experiences of the new principals were expected to reveal their perceptions of their practices of IL. After each principal interview opportunity for member checks to ensure that the participants confirm and or clarify information was provided (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I recorded, transcribed, coded, analyzed, and mapped data from the interviews back to the IL characteristics found in the PIMRS model defined by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) as provided for by the Practical Ideal Theory.

Definitions

For easy use and understanding of this study the keywords, concepts, and constructs used need to be defined to provide operational definitions and clarity with the intentions of the study.

IL: Refers to the school principal's role in the management of curriculum and instruction. Its characteristics are categorized in to three core dimensions and 10 functions. The dimensions include defining the school mission, managing instructional programs, and developing the school learning climate (Day & Sammons, 2014; Gordon, Taylor-Backor, & Croteau, 2017; Hallinger, Walker, Nguyen, Truong, & Nguyen, 2017; Sisman, 2016). It originates from the effective school's movement of the 1970s (Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982).

School principal: A principal is a person in the position of leadership in a school. He or She leads the entire school community with the responsibility to manage, administer and supervise all students and teachers. In some countries, they are referred to as headmaster or headmistress, headteacher, or school director.

Principal practices: School activities and roles that principals undertake to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational processes in the school to promote learning.

Principal understandings are the meanings that the school principals will ascribe to their words and individual perceptions of their life experiences.

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy also known as confidence is one's belief in their ability to demonstrate behaviors needed to accomplish a task or achieve goals (Versland

& Erickson, 2017). It also refers to an individual's belief of inner strength to accomplish goals. It is a judgment an individual makes of their ability to deal with potential situations (Bandura, 1977). It is the power of control or believing you can do something (Bandura, 1977; Maddux, 2012).

Practical Ideal Theory (PIT): The theory asserts that there is always a search for best practice. The key term is *practical*, which indicates that the ideal is under construction. The concept provides that to understand and improve reality there must be standards that researchers can build on (Shields & Tajali, 2006). It advances that a given structure guides the investigation of evidence and the organization of findings.

Microconceptual frameworks: The notion of microconceptual frameworks is the link to experience that shows how the conceptual framework guides data collection and interpretation (Shields & Tajali, 2006).

New principals: For this study, this will refer to the principals in their early years of principal-ship and have held the role for not more than 3 years.

Assumptions

Major assumptions considered in this study included:

1. The understanding that principals would answer interview questions authentically and truthfully.
2. That the criteria for inclusion of the selected principals as participants would be appropriate and would assure that the selected participants have experiences to share on the phenomenon of the study.

3. Participants of the study would willingly share their experiences (pleasant or unpleasant that have been lived rather than create experiences that do not reflect the reality of what they have done or not done.
4. The limited sample pool size of new principals appointed to leadership positions within not more than 3 years of experience within the selected district.

Scope and Delimitations

For scope, I focused on IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understanding of how to support teachers to be more effective instructors. It was limited to a selected number of school principals who had been appointed within the last 3years serving in two districts (woreda) in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. A purposive sample of seven school principals fluent in English who have been in service as principals for not more than 3 years, was considered relatively new as the focus of inquiry.

Given that the study was circumscribed to the understanding and experiences of the participants on IL practices, their willingness and truthfulness in sharing their experiences were recognized as a likely delimiting factor. Other delimitations that were faced during this study included time constraints for data collection and delays because of unpredictable sporadic civil unrest that affected movement to schools to conduct the interviews.

Although this study was specific to the context of Ethiopian primary school principals' experiences and understanding of IL the issue of transferability was addressed

by ensuring detailed descriptions of the data as well as the context are made that may allow for comparison to other contexts.

Limitations

This study's first limitation is an impact limitation because it is designed to focus on a specific population and location. The findings of this study may not be transferrable to a similar population due to the specificity of context and the small number of participants. However, I focused on obtaining thick descriptions of the data as well as the context to allow for comparisons to other contexts.

The limitation of accessibility to the research participants became a challenge as locations of schools where the new principals are deployed were far apart and mostly rural. This also linked to the time constraint as a limitation to the study.

Recognizing that issues of school leadership are sensitive, and the study addresses personal experiences on IL, the school principals may become self-aware during the interviews and therefore get tempted to exaggerate their experiences to look more effective than actual which will hinder accurate reporting resulting into failure to access the relevant data for the study. Member checking of the interview data was undertaken to allow participants to validate their information and provide expansions or deletions.

Given the understanding that in qualitative research, the researcher plays an important role in constructing meaning (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), I constantly reflected on my position as a specialist working with an international organization. My reflexivity captured my thoughts and impressions through journals and maintaining audit trails for

my subjectivities and assumptions that reduced their effect on my representation of the participants' views and their experiences.

Significance

Although IL has been a focus in the developed societies of Europe, North America, and Australia for a long time and widely implemented, it is understudied in the African context (Bush, 2014; Hallinger, 2018). Moreover, the kind of leadership enacted is determined by the contexts of leadership and there are limited indigenous conceptions of African school leadership (Bush, 2014; Hallinger, 2018). This study contributes to filling the gap in research on how new principals understand and demonstrate IL in their first 3 years of principal-ship in a developing African country context. The findings illuminate the level of understanding and the practices of new principals in primary schools in Ethiopia in their roles as instructional leaders and the challenges they face. The gaps in understanding and practice of the principals may inform the need for continuous professional development for new principals hence contributing to positive social change. These study findings also impact social change when the recommendations are applied by educational leadership program implementers and policy makers to develop or redesign leadership programs for school principals. Recruiters may also be more informed about the skills and knowledge needs of new principals.

Summary

Utilizing a qualitative study design, this study explored the new principal's understandings and practices of IL and how to support teachers to be more effective instructors. In chapter one an introduction describing the topic of study supported by

background information that describes the scope and gap that the study contributes to is presented. It also articulates the problem statement sharing evidence on the currency of the problem and describes the purpose of the study. The research questions and a definition of the conceptual framework that guided the study are included. In addition, the chapter also covers the nature of the study, defines key concepts and constructs to the study, identifies assumptions that are critical to the study and describes the scope and delimitation, limitations and also describes the significance of the study.

In chapter two, I describe the literature search strategy and undertake a robust synthesis of research literature on IL from the past five to six years with intent to address and justify the selected constructs of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Essential to clarifying the main concepts and constructs of the study topic is a review of the literature. It supports the generation of an understanding of what is already known about IL as the main construct of this study. As stated in the research problem, a gap exists in the research literature on the IL understandings and practices of new school principals. Hence, my purpose in this study was to explore the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understanding of how to support teachers to be more effective instructors. Experiences of the new principals were the main source of information used to understand the ways new principals perceive and practice IL at the beginning of their careers as principals. Drawn from the constructs of the topic, I used the following search terms to initiate a broad search: *IL, school leadership, school principals, school headteacher and educational leadership, teacher needs for instructional support, principals as instructional leaders, the school needs to improve instruction, school improvement,* and *supporting and developing teachers*. Other constructs that I used to expand the search included *newly appointed principals, novice principals, school managers, elementary schools and educational leadership and management in Africa* were used to ensure that the literature base is properly covered.

In Chapter 2, I restate the problem and the purpose of my study, and I describe the literature search strategy and the conceptual framework. In the sections that follow, I provide literature on constructs of the study including school leadership, and I discuss the concepts of understanding and practice defining how I use these concepts in the study. In

the following section in the chapter, I provide an overview of the concept of IL and detail its dimension and functions. Other sections cover the literature on the school principals' understanding and practice of IL, the challenges new principals face as instructional leaders. Finally, I provide a brief section on gaps in the literature and chapter summary and conclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

I used numerous research databases to find literature relevant to the topic. The primary source of literature was Walden University's Thoreau library through which several databases were accessed including Education Source, ERIC, SAGE Journals, ProQuest, the Dissertation and Thesis Database, and education journals. I used a Google search to find articles that could not be found in full text in some databases and verify the extent of citations for some of the articles. To ensure that the literature review was not limited to Western-based research and acknowledging that publication of African studies with regard to educational development, leadership, and management (EDLM) journals is limited (Asuga, Eacott, & Scevak, 2015; Hallinger, 2018). A specific focus to search for studies on EDLM in Africa ensured a systematic review of *Educational Administration Quarterly, Journal of Educational Administration, International Journal of Educational Management, African Journal of Education and Technology, African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems,* and *South African Journal of Education.* In all these journals, I searched volumes and issues published from 2013 to 2018 to find the most current literature. I conducted the search for peer-reviewed literature on leadership in Ethiopia through the link ejol.aau.edu.et review of the *Ethiopian Journal of Education*.

However, research in IL in Ethiopia is scarce. When a source was identified as relevant to the topic of study, I downloaded a pdf file and stored the information. Once I extracted the summary information the document would be filed away under specific headings. I set up a Microsoft Excel sheet to organize the summarized data and used it to derive the synthesis of what is in the literature.

Conceptual Framework

The PIT micro conceptual framework and the PIMRS formed the basis for the conceptual framework upon which I mapped the understanding and practice of the new principals. The PIT micro conceptual framework provides that data gathered of a given phenomenon can be gauged against an existing structure allowing what is observed to be compared with what is ideal. Hallinger's PIMRS model is identified as the ideal as it provides the statements of expectation of the phenomenon of IL that is under study. Gurley, Anast-May, O'Neal, and Dozier (2016) observed that the Hallinger and Murphy (1985) framework of IL identifies specific behaviors of principals that demonstrate the constructs of IL. I used the PIMRS terminology as an anchor for the data coding, analysis, and interpretation. This rating scale is a dominant tool used to understand IL practices of principals (Antoniou & Lu, 2017; Gurley et al., 2016; Hallinger et al., 2017). Given that the study contributes to a gap in research especially in Africa, using the PIRMS guides the identification of acceptable descriptions of the IL behaviors of new principals in Ethiopia.

Gurley et al., (2016) used the PIMRS to measure perceptions of principals on the frequency of IL behaviors that they employed by comparing the principal and teacher

self-reports. Nguyen, Hallinger, and Chen (2018) used the PIMRS in a mixed method to identify recommendations for strengthening IL in Vietnam engaging both teachers and principals from 117 schools. Nguyen et al. obtained a Vietnamese contextualized PIMRS tool and found that principals in Vietnam did enact IL behaviors consistent with international standards and that this was stronger with female principals that their male counterparts. Antoniou and Lu, (2017) used 311 teachers to examine the validity and reliability of the PIMRS in the Chinese Educational System. The results supported all aspects of the PIMRS that were being explored.

The concept of Self-Efficacy theory specific to RQ2 and RQ3 that allude to the fact that the IL practices that the primary school principals are likely to engage in were driven by their convictions of personal effectiveness that supported coping mechanisms of principals in playing their IL roles (Bandura, 1977).

Review of the most recent research reveals that self-efficacy has been studied as an attribute or construct that contributes to positive performance in different fields ranging from classroom teaching, teacher job satisfaction, improved goals of training, and demands of writing (Bausch, Michel, & Sonntag, 2014; Brown & Stanton-Chapman, 2014; Calcavecchi, 2018; Holmes, 2016;). Others used self-efficacy as a conceptual framework to explore how gaining mastery of the IL role provided insight into their capability to support instruction in their schools (Rockette, 2017). An exploration of whether self-efficacy played a role in any persistent practices of IL of the NPs identified in the data is considered as an explanation to the understandings of the experiences of the study participants. The IL understandings and practices of principals are examined

through the characteristics of the PIMRS and intertwined with the constructs of the study and research questions.

Defining School Leadership

School leadership involves enlisting and engaging a school community on activities that promote learning. It entails guiding and soliciting the support of teachers, students and parents to work toward achieving common educational goals. Two decades ago scholars observed that the concept of leadership had no agreed-upon definition (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Yulk, 2002). However, significant amounts of literature now exist that not only define leadership but also identify that there are different styles of leadership, various characteristics, and practices that demonstrate these styles and the understanding that leadership is intentional (Davis et al., 2010). The focus of this study was the IL practices of primary school leaders.

Authors from the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia dominate the literature on leadership in Africa (Bush, 2014). Through the years, the aspects of leadership researched in Africa include gender and leadership, school funding policy, emotional competence of leaders, performance agreements to enhance principal accountability for school performance, transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and preparation of principals (Bush, 2014).

Understanding. Understanding is a construct in education that is elusive in its definition. Understanding plays the role of enabling the transfer of knowledge into action or putting in practice what is learned. Wiggins and McTighe, (2005) pointed out that

there is a distinction between understanding and knowing something. Understanding is about transferring what is learned and creatively using it in new settings or in solving problems on one's own (Wiggins & McTighe ,2005). Great educationists have attempted to explain the concept of understanding in various ways. According to John Dewey (1938) understanding is achieved when facts acquire meaning for the learner. Bloom (1956) on his part stated that understanding is the ability to arrange skills and facts correctly by applying, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating.

Exploring principals' understanding of the concept of IL as a role explains their ability to undertake that role and engage others to participate in fulfilling that role. The ability to understand is important for the transfer of knowledge (Wiggins & McTighe (2005). Transferring knowledge to action is determined by the extent to which people have learned something with understanding. According to Kizlik, (2018) the concept to understand is to "know about" something. Kizlik, (2018) posited that with understanding a person can explain to others what they understand and that what is not understood in more than one way is not understood at all. Hence, understanding is demonstrated by being able to do something in the right way coupled with being able to explain why the action taken is the most appropriate.

In times when there is a need to demonstrate both what is known and what is done by the school principals as leaders, what they understand the leadership concepts and the functions to be is important. Shahbazi and Salinitri, (2016) asserted that principals' perceptions explain the process through which they manage and lead. While Kouali, (2017) observed that with a good understanding of concepts, the situation, and context in

which they work, principals learn to modify their leadership behavior and increase teacher engagement for effective teaching. These studies confirm that principals' understanding of the concept and functions of a given leadership role underlies what principals know and what they will routinely practice.

While Bloom's taxonomy is commonly referred to define levels of cognitive understanding, the consistent explanation in some of the literature on the concept of understanding is that it embodies gaining knowledge of something, ability to transfer the knowledge into action and modify actions according to context and the ability to explain to others what is known or learned. The concept of principals' understanding of IL was identified or interpreted through what they reported as their knowledge and actions from the experience in undertaking IL functions in the school.

Practices. Practices, on the other hand, are used in education to refer to the demonstration of skill or knowledge by doing. Ahva, (2017), identified practice as a form of performed action that can be identified by other people. Leadership practice is, therefore, a behavior that a leader chooses to consciously practice expanding their creative abilities and demonstrating their knowledge (Inam, 2011). Practices are characterized by being actions that are performed, can become routine and can be identified and evaluated (Ahva, 2017). For this study principals' practices of IL will be understood as the actions that they perform to deploy leadership directed to the management of curriculum and instruction.

The Concept of Instructional Leadership

Scholars of school leadership assert that instructional leadership is an Anglo – American concept that originates from the effective school's research of the 1980s (Salo, Nylund, & Stjernstrom, 2015). The school leadership scholars assert that IL should be the central responsibility for school principals in every education system (Hallinger & Lee, 2013; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). IL is viewed as curriculum and instructional management and is focused on how school leaders contribute to student learning outcomes. (Hoadley, Christie, & Ward, 2009). Documentation in the literature reveals that IL has been studied through different lenses including as a construct of effective school leadership (Hallinger, 2018; Hallinger, Wang, Chen, & Liare, 2015; Setwong & Prasertcharoensuk, 2013); as a strategy to achieving good performance of students (Kremer et al., 2013); as a practice to engage and motivate teachers (Aydin, Kenanand, & Ali, 2017; Castro, Amante, & Morgado, 2017); and as a critical role for principalship (Gumus et al., 2018; Southworth, 2002; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). In addition, studies have also investigated different education stakeholder insights into the concept and practice of IL (Bickmore & Dowell, 2014; Sisman, 2016).

Ng et al., (2015) through their review of IL in Singapore identified other aspects of IL for continued research. Some of the areas investigated span from examining factors that impact IL and the influence of successful principal IL on students learning; how IL can be initiated and what sets of IL practices exist that can be learned and adapted. Brazer and Bauer, (2013) argued that IL is not just a task or

standard to be met but a practice for principals that should be regular in school leadership.

The rationale for this study's focus on the understandings and practices of new principals follows from several areas raised by scholars in the field. The limitation in research on IL relates to it being developed more on the "what" it is rather than "how" it is an important role for principals and the expectation that principals should be increasingly involved in curriculum delivery and student performance (Bush, 2011; Bush, 2014; Taole, 2013).

School principals in Africa are a category of leaders who often find themselves isolated at the start of a complex and demanding career. According to Bush and Oduro, (2006), new principals in Africa manage schools in very difficult situations. Principals lack preparation for leadership, they receive limited induction or in-service training, and no support from their immediate supervisors. (Bush & Glover, 2013; Bush & Oduro, 2006; Hoadley et al., 2009). Therefore, to explore what new principals understand and practice as instructional leaders will allow educators and researchers to recognize what new principals understand as IL and what support they need to be effective instructional leaders.

Components of Instructional Leadership

The work of Hallinger and his colleagues guides the insights and discussions on IL. It establishes three dimensions within which are 10 functions of leadership (Hallinger, 2018; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger et al., 2015). Hallinger and Murphy, (1985) identified the first dimension of IL as defining the school

mission comprising of the role to frame and communicate school goals. The second dimension of managing instructional programs incorporates coordinating the curriculum, supervising and evaluating instruction and monitoring student progress (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The third dimension of developing the school learning climate includes protecting instructional time, motivating both teachers and learners, promoting professional development and maintaining school visibility (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Defining the School Mission. Research on this component of IL is dominated by western literature (Hallinger et al., 2017). Hitt and Tucker, (2016) highlighted the process for defining the school mission and vision to include creating, articulating and stewarding. This may seem a simple task for school principals but the important practice to engage in is the "how-to" set the direction with both buy-in and participation of school stakeholders to implement it for the long term (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

To define the school mission is a critical function in IL. The school principals' ability to define the school mission means that there is an insight into what is desired of the school in the short and long term and that the principal will lead the engagement of the school community to achieving what is desired. According to Nguyen et al., (2018), the school principal is responsible for articulating, communicating and coordinating support for enacting the mission of the school. Similarly, Kemp, Hardy and Haris (2014) in examining the relationship between school leaders' vision and teachers' beliefs about the vision, found that teachers value the existence of a clear school vision and will work to fulfill the agreed school vision for their school other than that imposed by the district. They posited that the responsibility to develop, sustain and conserve the school mission is

the duty of the principal and it is the actions of the principal that will inspire and motivate the rest of the school community to pursue the school mission (Kemp et al., 2014). Similarly, Foreman and Moranto, (2018) in summarizing the literature on whether principals of charter schools were more empowered than traditional school principals, observed that a coherent school mission yields school success and leadership autonomy. Creating a good school vision should be a participatory process that considers both the school environment and the community the school serves (Kemp et al., 2014). These studies emphasized the value teachers and principals place on having a clear school mission and the importance of adopting a participatory approach to the implementation process. Hence, new principals must possess skills that enhance their ability to lead the process of defining and implementing the school mission.

Managing the Instructional Program. To manage the instructional program, the school principals need to be knowledgeable about the demands of teaching and learning and be committed to school improvement (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Gawlik, 2018). Interestingly some studies identified that the dimension of managing instructional programs is the least attended to by school principals (Hallinger & Truong, 2014; Hallinger et al., 2015; Walker & Hallinger, 2015). However, in the Vietnamese context, Hallinger et al., (2015) found that there were consistent practices of principals' active involvement to improve teaching and learning in collaboration with teachers. These included walkthroughs to ascertain classes started on time, conducting classroom observations and follow up meetings with individual teachers and or members of an entire department for feedback on observed lessons. Ultimately emphasizing the

critical function of the principal to supervise and monitor teaching and learning in the school.

School Learning Climate Development. An important dimension of IL that impacts on teacher empowerment is developing the school learning climate. Research confirms that school climate influences teacher job satisfaction and teacher self-efficacy. Aldridge and Fraser, (2016) asserted that it is important for school principals to enhance factors within the school climate that impact school effectiveness because a positive school environment fosters positive feelings among teachers for improved instruction. Similarly, Salleh and Abu Bakar, (2018) in seeking to identify headteacher practices that promote an effective school learning climate found that teachers appreciate praise, recognition and formal awards from their principals. Besides, Kraft, et al., (2015) assert that teacher commitment is determined by relationships among the teachers and their principal and the quality of the school culture. However, Killion, (2015) observed that changes principals make in the learning climate independent of other school stakeholders are insufficient to improve the instructional climate and student achievement. It is notable that whereas it is the principal's role to create a good school learning climate, the involvement and participation of other school stakeholders is important for sustaining a school learning climate that supports effective instructional practices. New school principals should, therefore, be equipped with skills and practices that ensure the development of an effective learning climate.

Protecting along with promoting instructional time and professional development are critical IL functions for developing the school learning climate. The ability of the

school principal to establish systems and structures that protect instructional time as well as program, monitor and implement effective professional development demonstrates effective IL practice. According to Sebastian, Allensworth and Huang, (2016) school principals should directly manage professional development, school program coherence, and engage teachers in improving the school learning environment. In their study Sebastian et al., observed that whereas principal practices influence learning climate, the pathways through which it happens matter hence, choices that principals make should directly relate to student achievement. Similarly, Thapa, Cohen, Guffey and Higgins-D'Alessandro, (2013) claimed that an effective school climate should be assessed by considering school stakeholder perceptions on job security, their relations and an institutional environment that ensures effective teaching and learning. Effective school climate matters and the power to create it is in the hands of the individual and communities of educators in each school (Thapa et al., 2013). Accordingly, these studies underscore the importance of the school climate as an element of IL and point out that it should not be left to chance but should be managed and coordinated by those in authority at school level and should be directed towards enhancing students learning.

Setwong and Prasertcharoensuk, (2013) conducted a quantitative study to validate a structural equation model of IL and how it impacts school effectiveness. They found that the school learning climate influences school effectiveness, curriculum, and instructional development. They recommended a policy focus to develop IL skills for school leaders because of its direct impact on professional development, curriculum, and instruction, learning climate and classroom supervision. While Cherkowski, (2016)

through a study on the practices of one principal, observed that creating a professional learning climate begins with building a trusting relationship with teachers followed by demonstrating commitment to a shared vision for learning in teaching enhanced by the principal's willingness to model their professional learning. Thus, although the study by Setwong and Prasertcharoensuk, (2013) underscored creating a good school learning climate and the principals' role in sustaining the conditions for effective engagement, it did not distinguish the specific aspects of IL that impact curriculum and instruction. However, both studies highlighted that the engagement of teachers is an important aspect of creating an effective school learning climate.

School Principals' Understanding and Practice of IL

Principal leadership practices are initiatives or actions taken by principals to address the salient features of leading a school and contribute to the outcomes desired by school communities (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Kouzes and Posner, (2012) defined leadership practices as activities that can be observed in the practices of leaders. In their study, they explore what principals understand and do to demonstrate IL functions. Scholars have identified that principals demonstrate their understanding through the aspects of leadership they focus more attention on when managing the different contexts in their schools (Hallinger, 2011; Preston, Jakubiec, & Kooymans, 2013; Tuters, 2015). Hence, their understanding of IL determined the actions they take to support instruction in the classroom (Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

Leaders in organizations and principals alike should rely on their understanding of the school community's expectations to define their leadership practices. Having a good

understanding of school community expectations requires both time and tact. Wieczorek and Manard, (2018) conducted a phenomenological study on six novice principals in rural public schools to explore their interpretations of IL challenges. They found that although the principals balanced their professional and private lives, the community's expectation for them to be visible and engaged were not met. Wieczorek and Manard, observed that the principals focused on relationship and trust-building among the school community members and less on visibility and engagement. Accordingly, for school leaders to maintaining high visibility as a function of IL, a good understanding of community expectations must be considered.

Whereas principals must get proper training on school leadership, it takes more than knowledge and skill to be a successful school principal. The school setting contributes to what a principal will be able to do or not. Singh and Allison, (2016) explored principals' understanding of their work and their leadership roles identifying that there is a difference in the way principals from higher and lower performing schools understood and implemented their roles as school leaders. Higher performing school principals were proactive informing policies and instituting leadership practices that empowered teachers and students while the lower performing school principals focused more on the overwhelming challenges they had to work through (Singh & Allison, 2016). Good practices of the high performing school principals included developing action plans, a school culture, and fostering teamwork and collaboration all focused on improving student achievement.

School principal practices that involve and engage teachers demonstrate their understanding of the importance of collaboration as an aspect of IL. Aydin et al., (2017) interviewed 20 teachers investigating how their administrators empowered them and found that administrators in the Turkish school system empowered teachers through engagement in decision making, making school attractive places to work, and building relationships based on trust. However, they also highlighted that the principals did not support teacher professional development and teacher autonomy (Aydin et al., 2017). Whether or not principals emphasize collaboration in working with teachers, teacher empowerment must include professional development and the opportunity for autonomy. Failure to ensure the promotion of teacher growth will undermine efforts to provide incentives for teachers as a function of IL.

Botha (2013) examined the relationship between principals' key assumptions of knowledge and leadership behaviors in the school context and found that a principals' assumption about knowledge predicts and influences the leadership approaches they use. On the other hand, Zeleke and Girma, (2014) explored leadership styles of principals in government primary schools in Ethiopia. Using a standardized Leadership Orientation Questionnaire, they concluded that the principals were more managers than leaders as they demonstrated confidence in managing human resources and structural activities than leading on issues related to improved instruction. Ultimately, principals' level of understanding IL determines its successful practice at the school level.

Challenges New Principals Face as Instructional Leaders

Principals face challenges in leadership every day, how they respond daily supports their effort to establish practices that either result in effective leadership or challenge their role as leaders. A principals' role is a significant one in every school community. The principals' position is characteristic of balancing their obligations to the school, community, and family (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Effective principal actions are more pertinent to school performance than the time spent on a particular leadership practice (Burkhauser, Gates, Laura, Hamilton, & Gina Schuyler Ikemoto, 2012).

Bastian and Henry, (2015) sought to describe the characteristics and training experiences of 981 first-time principals and how these characteristics relate to student achievement. They found most first-time principals were hired from within their district and waited for over 9 years to become school principals. They concluded that the environment in which the principals served as assistant principals may affect their effectiveness as full principals and suggest the need for further analyses of meaningful engagement experiences of assistant principals.

Weinstein, Azar, and Flessa, (2018) sought to identify the link between formal education and training of school leaders and their leadership practices. They analyzed secondary data from seven Latin American countries. Weinstein et al., found that there is only a marginal effect from education and training on leadership practices. They also observed the nonexistence of principal performance standards across countries in the study. They argued that it is important for the school climate to support principal practices of leadership otherwise it compounds the challenges faced in leadership

practice. Ultimately, there are no roles in the school leadership that come without challenges and IL is no exception. The challenges seem to include limitations in principals' knowledge and training, their lack of capacity to manage and provide quality IL and the inadequate conditions under which the principals and teachers work to support teaching and learning.

Principal Perceptions of Effective Teacher Support

This study explored new principal understandings and practices of IL and their support to teachers for effective instruction in their early years of principalship. Bellibas and Liu, (2017) investigated the connection between principal perceived IL practices and perceived teacher self-efficacy on selected aspects of effective instruction. Through analyzing teacher and school-level data from the OECD survey, they found a strong relationship between teacher self-efficacy and effective instruction. Bellibas and Liu asserted that principal engagement in the teaching and learning process influences teachers' self-efficacy. They concluded that because IL enhances a sense of ability in teachers for student engagement, classroom, and instruction management, it should be encouraged as an essential element of school leadership practice.

Teachers often look to their school principals as supporters and facilitators of quality teaching and learning processes and feel valued when principals provide their support with respect (Dutta & Sahney, 2016). Duyar, Gumus, and Bellibas, (2013) used a Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) method on OECD TALIS secondary data set to investigate the connection between principal leadership practice, teacher collaboration, and teacher self-efficacy. Duyar et al., found that principal

engagement in IL activities including supervision of teaching predicts teachers' self-efficacy and that teachers who regularly engage in appraisal and receive feedback on their classroom teaching demonstrated higher levels of self-efficacy. On their part, Meyer and Behar-Horenstein, (2015) conducted a post hoc data analysis to investigate the effectiveness of the response to intervention (RTI) and found that teachers were challenged in implementing interventions because they lacked leadership support, resources, and professional development. They highlighted that without clear leadership teachers struggled with uncertainty on their roles in managing and using data-based decision making. The study emphasized the importance of providing a clear direction and offering teachers professional development on coaching for improved instruction and decision making. Both studies emphasized the fundamental role the principal plays in ensuring the effectiveness of teachers and the success of interventions in schools. Hence, it is important for school systems and structures to support the quality of principal engagement in providing instructional support.

Effective schools support and develop teachers through activities that promote collaboration for improved teaching and learning. Orphanos and Orr, (2014) studied 764 teachers grouped by type of preparation their school principals received to comprehend the effect of leaders' preparation on the actual practices of the principals as leaders. They found there is a direct effect of innovative leadership preparation on principal leadership practices while the effect on teacher collaboration is indirect. In their work they outlined innovative leadership preparation to include programs that; utilize a standards-based curriculum; student-centered instruction; engage knowledgeable faculty and practitioners;

target recruitment of teachers with leadership potential, and conduct supervised internship focused on the adequate practice of leadership responsibilities. They asserted that principal preparation has a moderating influence on principal leadership and teacher outcomes. While Castro et al., (2017) using data from 234 teachers to analyze the relationship between school principal support and teacher collaboration found that teacher involvement in collaboration can be predicted by emotional and information support received from principals as well as support for professional development.

Every school provides a different context which determines the kind of leadership practices that will thrive (Bush, 2014). According to Day and Sammons, (2014) Principals' direct support to the work of teachers has a positive impact on teacher effectiveness. Similarly, the effective leadership of principals determines the levels of teacher, parent and student engagement. In a cross-country educational research study, Marfan and Pascual, (2018) identified that student success can be influenced by school leadership activities and the school context. They questioned the existence of a collection of effective leadership practices arguing that local contexts influence the leadership exhibited in a given educational establishment. They posited that principal leadership practices with the most impact are those that support teachers in their work and professional development. However, they found that principals engaged more in practices that focused on school administrative goals than those that improve teacher performance (Marfan & Pascual, 2018).

Pietsch and Tulowitzki, (2017) examined the connection between leadership styles and teacher instructional practices finding that IL influenced classroom

management but a combination of leadership styles is required to influence complex instructional practices. These studies highlighted that effective leadership practices need to be adaptable to different contexts, therefore, a principal's ability to draw on an appropriate skill or practice to guide a specific situation in the school demonstrates their understanding of the context of their work.

Principals' support of a safe and positive learning and working environment is an important dimension of IL. Salo et al., (2015) examined IL in three Scandinavian countries (Norway, Finland, and Sweden) and found that IL is under-researched. They observed that there is limited information on why, when and how teachers receive principals' support in the classroom. Salo et al., (2015) analyzed 100 school leader narratives and found that principals in Scandinavian countries focus on strengthening infrastructure for professional resilience and respect but do not engage in guiding teaching in the classroom. Managing instructional programs is a significant role in IL which an effective principal should demonstrate with competence.

Taole, (2013) investigated the principal's capacity to provide IL. He found that curriculum change management training was lacking among principals and as a result, the principals considered that they are more managers than instructional leaders. Taole, (2013) also observed that barriers such as parent disruptions and administrative workload constrained the principals from undertaking instructional roles. He suggests that delegation of administrative tasks would free the principal's time for performing the IL tasks. Hence, the availability of the principal coupled with

scheduled and planned time to manage instructional programs is a demonstration of effective and good instructional practice.

Brazer and Bauer, (2013) in their work observe that there is a dilemma in what IL preparation is. They employed a problem-based learning model (PBL) for training aspiring instructional leaders and assert that PBL is appropriate for learning IL practices because leaders get to learn and expand their leadership capacity by practicing. Effective school leaders should strive to develop and sustain conditions at school that facilitate instructional learning (Southworth, 2002), and engage with teachers regularly to inquire and create knowledge to improve teaching (Salo et al., 2015).

A continued focus to understand IL practices that teachers feel and believe support them to become better teachers is important. Goddard, Goddard, Kim and Miller, (2015) tested the theoretical connections between principal leadership, teacher collaboration, collective efficacy, and student achievement and found that principal's IL predicted the quality of teacher collaboration. They asserted that principal effective IL practices support teacher classroom instruction and reinforce school systems that foster student learning. Goddard et al., also highlight teachers' preference for regular principal monitoring of instruction and provision of quality instructional guidance to achieve teacher collective work and improved instruction. Similarly, Derrington and Campbell, (2018) advanced that because principals value collaboration they are likely to adopt a practice or a skill or use a tool if it enhances their teacher support role. These studies emphasized an important link between teacher needs for support and principal motivation

to adopt a leadership action or practice that supports teachers' work. Addressing the gap in the research literature on IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals will support efforts to improve the practice of IL in the developing African country contexts.

Researchers acknowledge the role that principal IL skills and practices play in support of teachers' work in schools. Ail et al., (2015) in examining the connection between IL and teacher commitment found a significant relationship. They pointed out that although principals do not practice IL enough their IL predicts teachers' attitudes towards change. Ail et al., advise that school principals should utilize their IL skills to nurture teacher commitment. They assert that principals must possess IL skills to be able to effect successful educational change in schools. Malakolunthu, McBeath and Swaffield, (2014) also offered evidence that school leadership matters. They highlighted the dual impact of school leadership on students learning and the moral and pedagogical skills of teachers achieved through creating a positive school culture. However, in an earlier large-scale qualitative study on leadership practices in South African schools Jita, (2010) had a puzzling finding of a non-existent relationship between leadership and instruction although the successful schools defined leadership goals around instruction and had systems to monitor instruction. While Handford and Leithwood, (2013) in exploring why teachers trust in school leaders is significant found that, leadership practices of school leaders influenced the level of teacher trust. They also noted that the leaders' disposition to be consistent, reliable, open, respectful and a person of integrity are characteristics that teachers value. These studies all highlight the important role that

principal leadership practice plays in supporting teachers' need for instructional support by ensuring teacher commitment and trust.

Moreover, teachers value emotional and environmental support from their principal. In a non-experimental study Hughes, Matt and O'Reilly, (2014) explored the association between the support principals provide and teacher retention and found that teachers want to be valued within the school systems. Being given adequate time for curriculum and planning for instruction, receiving timely feedback and recognition for good work, opportunities for professional development and having appropriate workload are factors that teachers looked to principals for support. Similarly, Kraft et al., (2015) examined uncertainty teachers face working in high poverty schools and the organizational support they need. They found that uncertainty in teachers' work was mostly about the students they taught. They posited that in such contexts teachers needs include coordinated instructional support, parental engagement, systems for order, discipline and emotional support. Hence the need for an instructional leader to keep in mind the relationship between teacher support needs and their commitment to student achievement remains critical. The focus on a supportive work environment and cultivating a good school culture for the teachers is equally important.

It is key that IL cultivates a school learning climate that empowers teachers to become better at teaching. Balkar, (2015) sought teacher perceptions on what an empowering school culture is and found that teachers consider principals' confidence, ability to lead change and practice of collaborative management as characteristics that benefit them in empowering school culture. Teachers preferred principals who empower

them to do their work well. They concluded that school principals can achieve teacher empowerment through professional development and engagement in decision making on school matters (Balkar, 2015). Correspondingly, Gawlik, (2018) observed that having autonomy over curriculum decisions, instructional practices, teacher evaluation, staffing, and budgeting are factors that strengthen and expand the scope of IL in practice. These studies highlighted a difference in what teachers and principals consider as empowering school culture. To teachers, it is linked to what principals can do to support them while to the principals, it is the authority and power to act in support of the instructional process in their schools. Thus, a notable stance for effective principal IL practice is that as teachers require school leaders to demonstrate IL through their confidence and ability to lead change, the principals value autonomy to undertake such responsibilities.

Notably, principal support practices can be directly initiated by the principal but sometimes can be influenced by teacher commitment and interest to improve instruction. Bartolini, Worth and Jensen La Conte, (2014) explored how school principals can support teachers motivated to initiating change, they identified that principals who cultivate teacher proactiveness enhanced an intellectual and trusting relationship with their teachers. Although, Bartolini et al., based these assertions on the experiences of one teacher they outline strategies principals use in support of teachers to include organizational and planning skills, creating time to work with others, provision of materials and technology and allocation of appropriate school and classroom schedules. These strategies were also echoed by Jita, (2010) who advanced that school leader tasks for IL roles should include planning, collaboration, dialogue and personal engagement

with teachers. Although these studies highlight the effective strategies principals can employ in implementing IL, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken.

Within the African context, Tesfaw and Hofman, (2014) explored attitudes of new and experienced teaches on instructional supervision a function of IL and its relationship with professional development and found no difference between new and experienced teachers' attitudes towards instructional supervision but confirmed that teachers' attitudes and satisfaction contribute to professional development. Ahmed, (2016) investigated IL in secondary schools of Assosa zone in Ethiopia and found that although some of the characteristics of IL were demonstrated in secondary schools, IL practices were lacking. Edamo, (2018) on his part assessed principal IL performance in secondary schools in Hawassa Ethiopia and found that some principals had exercised IL but noted that a good proportion of the principals in the study did not engage in practices that demonstrate even the most basic functions of IL such as providing classroom support to teachers. Whereas research on IL is scarce in the context of African, the few studies reviewed in this literature indicate that IL practice is yet to become commonplace in schools.

Summarily, the literature on IL practices teachers report as supportive in improving teaching and learning reveals that teachers value working with school principals who demonstrate competence, reliability, and consistency in the guidance they provide. As professionals, teachers value work processes that nurture their commitment and collaboration, build trust, provide emotional support and empowering school culture.

Gaps in the Literature

Studies on IL in Ethiopia are scarce. Most of the studies focus on leadership training, an investigation into the school leader's capacity to demonstrate leadership styles including transformational, distributive and bureaucratic leadership and principal practice in curriculum implementation (Shega, & Tarekegne, 2018; Tesfaw, 2014; Zeleke & Girma, 2014). With varying results, the research on IL in Ethiopia has concentrated on secondary schools (Ahmed, 2016; Edamo, 2018; and Tesfaw & Hofman, 2014). There is, therefore, a need to look into the IL understanding and principal practices in primary schools. This study will address the gap of research on new primary school Principals, their understanding of IL and their support effective instruction.

Although researchers have identified the various characteristics of IL, explored these characteristics in many contexts, emphasized IL as central to leadership preparation, (Bastian & Henry, 2015; Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Weinstein et al., 2018; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018) and investigated the challenges of IL (Derrington & Campbell, 2018; Gawlik, 2018; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018), what is less known is the understanding of IL as experienced by new school principals in a developing African country.

Summary and Conclusion

Overall, the review of the literature reveals that research on IL continues to concentrate on experiences and contexts in the western world. However, studies have now expanded to Asia and the pace at which it is happening in the African context needs

to be enhanced to respond to the need for better understanding, interpretation, and application of the instruction leadership role expected to impact the quality of instruction in schools. It goes without saying that because school leadership influences the quality of classroom instruction, new school principals cannot afford to ignore developing and engaging in IL practices.

Moreover, the changing expectations of what school principals should achieve through school leadership, the multiplicity of dimensions of this role continues to be a challenge in practice. School principals require knowledge, skills and proven and adaptable school leadership strategies to meet expectations of principalship. Hence, the current attention to exploring the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understanding of how to support teachers to be more effective instructors with intent to contribute to the gap in the research literature.

In chapter 3 I describe the methodology for the study. I also present the research design and rationale for the selection of the method and research tradition. Further, I explain the role of the researcher, the participant selection criteria, the instruments used in the study and I also elaborate on the issues of trustworthiness as well as the study ethical procedures and concerns.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the instructional leadership understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understanding of teacher support for effective instruction. I sought to identify what new principals understand their role to be and the challenges they encounter in practicing IL. Further, I identified self-reported experiences and practices that new primary school principals use to support teachers to provide effective classroom instruction. The school principals' role in the management and leadership of the schools determines the work and learning environment for teachers and students, respectively.

Chapter 3 is organized into five major sections that address the different aspects of the methodology for the study. In the first section, I describe the research design and the rationale within which the research questions, the research tradition, and the justification for the choice of the tradition are articulated. The section that follows discusses the researcher's role in the study, explains the researcher's relationships with the participants concerning data collection, and analysis including biases and ethical issues. Then follows a definition of the methodology, the procedures for instrumentation, site and participant selection, data collection, and analysis. The chapter closes with a section on Issues of Trustworthiness covering the components of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures follow. Last, I provide a chapter summary.

Research Design and Rationale

This basic qualitative research study answers the following four research questions.

1. RQ1: What are new school principals' understandings of instructional leadership in Ethiopia?
2. RQ2: How do new principals' practice instructional leadership?
3. RQ3: How do new principals support teachers to be more effective instructors?
4. RQ4: What challenges do new principals face in their role as instructional leaders?

In this study, I explored the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understanding of teacher support for effective instruction. The research tradition for this study was the basic qualitative research study. Jorgensen (2015) advanced that a research tradition provides the general framework with which analytical interventions in a study can be done. The choice of using a basic qualitative research tradition acknowledges the multiplicity and range of approaches and techniques in qualitative research. The selected research tradition was a good fit because in the study, I aimed at exploring the understandings and practices of IL of new school principals. As Ravitch and Carl (2016) pointed out, qualitative research pursues an understanding of the way people see, view, approach, and make meaning of their experiences and actions. To discover and describe what a particular group of people do in everyday life and what their actions mean to them is a qualitative inquiry (Versland & Erickson, 2017). Merriam and

Tisdell (2015) also asserted that basic qualitative research is the most historically utilized qualitative research approach of all time. It allows for interpretation of and attribution of meaning to experiences of participants (Merriam, 2009).

Whereas other traditions in qualitative research such as biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study could have been chosen for this study, their alignment to the research questions was more challenging to define. For instance, taking the biographical approach would have limited the study to the reconstruction of meaning based on biographical narratives and documents (life history or narrative study of lives). Ethnography would have required me as a researcher to become immersed in the culture and life of the participants. Ethnography is an approach for studying cultures and groups in a natural setting for a lengthy period (Reeves, Peller, Goldman, & Kitto, 2013). It underscores the in-person field study requiring getting immersed through participant observations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It combines and triangulates observations, interviews and documentary data to understand social actions (Reeves et al., 2013). This would not have aligned with the timing available for the completion of this dissertation. As Padilla-Diaz, (2015) observes that although all qualitative research has a phenomenological aspect, it is difficult to apply the approach to all categories of qualitative research.

Furthermore, this study was not intended for constructing a theory; therefore, the grounded theory would not be an appropriate tradition to use because it would require a focus on techniques and procedures for concept identification and theory building-inductive strategies (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Phenomenology also was not an

appropriate design for this study for its focus on particular human experience or experiential moment and arriving at a commonality in that specific experience (Creswell, 2013). Besides, the case study approach would also be inapplicable as it requires exploring the phenomenon in real-life contexts (Singh, & Allison, 2016). Because I focused on exploring new principals' understanding and practices of IL as reported through their experiences through time, the basic qualitative approach was the best fit for its focus on the interpretation of and attribution of meaning to the experiences of participants (Merriam, 2009).

Role of the Researcher

According to Xu and Storr, (2012) the quality of data generated in a qualitative study depends on the expert skills of the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection. My role in data collection included conducting face-to-face, in-depth interviews with participants. I transcribed and coded all the data and analyzed it. I maintained field notes through journals and audit trails to capture impressions, environmental contexts, behavior, and any nonverbal cues during the interviews. I used the notes and memos to mitigate personal bias and complement the audio-taped interviews.

Qualitative research warrants that a researcher identifies any relationships with the participants that may threaten the integrity of data collected in an interview. I did not have any supervisory or controlling power in any form neither was there any direct relationship with the participants. Fortunately, my position in working with UNICEF in support of the Ministry of Education was not misconstrued by the participants as one of

authority. I declared and clarified in both written and explained orally that the research study being conducted is for academic purposes at Walden University and has nothing to do with the work of the Ministry of Education or with the organization I work for (UNICEF).

In pursuit of conducting a quality research study its critical to consider the concept of researcher bias including the possible threat of power relations on the quality of data collected; hence the need to uphold the concept of reflexivity. Reflexivity requires that researchers articulate their position and possible subjectivities in conducting the research. Sutton and Austin (2015) observed that a qualitative researcher critically considers reflexivity by clearly reflecting and articulating both their position and subjectivities in the study. This is important because it allows the readers to appreciate the filters with which the research questions were asked, the data analyzed, and the results reported (Sutton & Austin, 2015). For this study, my background as a teacher and a teacher educator and previous experience working in school improvement projects was considered as a potential bias. For this reason, I maintained journals and audit trails to document impressions, the environmental contexts, nonverbal cues, and behavior during the interviews. The journals and audit trails were then linked to each interview transcribed data to help complement the audio-taped interviews and mitigate personal bias while analyzing the data. After every interview, I documented my thoughts and feelings to separate them from what I heard or observed during the interviews. Given that this study involved the participation of primary school principals from the selected

region, I declare no conflict of interest as I have not directly worked with the principals hence no power differentials.

Methodology

Outlining the procedures of investigation in a research study equates to defining the methodology. It is the science of finding out or the approach or a plan for gathering and analyzing information in the research study (Babbie, 2017; Egbert & Sanden, 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This section also addresses the selection of participants and study sites.

Site and Participant Selection Logic. In this study, the population was new primary school principals who have held the role of principal for not more than 3 years. I planned to select a purposeful sample of eight principals fluent in English for the study. However, the situation as described in chapter 3 led to interviews being held with only seven participants as several potential participants from the overall list of 16 eligible participants declined to sign the consent form. The criterion for participant selection aligned with the purpose of the study to explore the IL understanding and practices of new primary school principals. The emphasis on fluency in English was stressed to avoid the use of an interpreter as there was a possibility that some principals may not feel comfortable expressing themselves English. The participants were known to meet the selection criteria when they fulfilled the criterion of having been appointed as a primary school principal in the last 3 years and able to communicate relatively fluently in English. All four questions of this study were answered by principals who are new in their role and have served in the role of principalship for not more than 3 years.

Sampling strategy. New school principals were the main participants of the study that indicated the need for a purposeful sample because not all primary school principals in the woreda (district) were new in their positions. The criteria for having served in the principal role for not more than 3 years was the major attribute for the choice of a purposeful sampling strategy. Both male and female new school principals who were found to meet the set criteria were included. Principals were known to meet the criteria if they were appointed to the position of principalship in September 2015 academic year. Any principal appointed before September 2015 or transferred to the district in 2015 but served elsewhere as a principal was excluded.

Procedures for Recruitment and Participation

As required, I applied to the Walden University Institutional Review Board to obtain approval to undertake this study. With an approval letter from the University, I sought permission to conduct research in schools from the Ministry of education and the Oromia Regional education Bureau in Ethiopia. I obtained the list and contacts of 16 eligible principals from the Regional Education Bureau. I then shared a copy of the University approval letter and the letters of permission with all participants before the start of each interview.

I made an initial contact with each principal by phone to introduce the research study and request their participation. At the face-to-face meeting I introduced the study by explaining its purpose following the details in the participant consent form (Appendix A). My plan was to call all the principals on the list until I found 8 principals willing to participate in the study. However, many of the participants who initially agreed to

participate declined after the consent form was shared and explained to them. A total of seven out of the 16 participants declined to participate and two principals had transferred to different districts by the time of the interviews. As a result, I was able to make appointments for the in-depth interviews with only seven principals who signed the consent forms indicating acceptance to participate.

Saturation and Sample size. Although Fusch and Ness, (2015) observed that the concept of saturation is hard to define, in qualitative research it refers to the concepts of no new data, themes, codes, categories and the ability to replicate the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Similarly, saturation must be practical and coherent with the research questions (Saunders et al., 2017). It should not be only about the sample size but rather the depth of data obtained. Further, Burmeister and Aitken, (2012) articulated the relationship between saturation and sample size stressing that the constitution of the sample size should provide the best opportunity for reaching data saturation but not be determined by large or small sample size. For this study, the point of saturation was reached when the interview participants began to repeat their responses and or refer to what was already said in response to previously asked questions, indicating no new information can be added to their responses. Saturation was also identified during the coding process when coding and categorization did not yield new codes, categories or themes.

Instrumentation

I was the primary data collection instrument conducting face-to-face interviews with the new principals. I used an interview protocol that is researcher-produced and

includes probes used as follow up questions (Appendix B). Jacob and Furgerson, (2012) advised that good interview protocols should include scripts of what the researcher will say at the beginning and conclusion of the interview. The interview protocol I developed combined both open-ended questions and the procedural guide for the interview process. I also used a brief questionnaire to collect demographic data of each participant.

Procedures for Data Collection

The main instrument for data collection was a semi-structured face-to-face interview with each participant. According to Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, and Docent (2016) there are multiple ways to conduct semi structured interviews including face-to-face, telephone, individual, and group. I initiated the procedure for collecting data with the recruitment of the seven new principals and solicitation of their consent to participate. At each interview, I initiated discussions to build rapport with the participant focusing on clarifying the purpose of the research. I then conducted interviews of between 45 -90 minutes that were all audiotaped using two taping tools a smartphone and a portable audio recorder. After transcribing the initial interview data, I used member checking as a way to allow participants to clarify any ideas or concepts from the initial interview. Participants confirmed their submissions as accurate transcriptions and translations where they had used mother tongue explanations.

Data Analysis Plan

The instrument for data analysis in basic qualitative research is the researcher. In this study the I made the judgments on coding, theming and interpreting the collected data. The data analysis process was iterative and ongoing. Moreover, Ravitch and Carl, (2016)

asserted that qualitative data analysis has multiple non-linear intersecting phases and shared features. These include concurrent collection and analysis of data, data coding, writing of analytic memos, and developing analytical ideas and concepts (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I also focused close attention to maintaining fidelity to the new principals as experts of their own experiences. Using thematic analysis, I transcribed the data verbatim and coded using a flexible coding structure leading to an analysis that formed a basis for qualitative interpretation. Once I established the codes, themes, and categorizations as the "practical" of the principals' understandings and practices , I then used the "ideal" represented by the PIMRS to compare the categories formed. I then, organized the data into meaningful themes and categories as they linked to each research question.

To emphasize and demonstrate rigor and trustworthiness in this study, I recorded thick descriptions, used systematized coding and details of the data analysis process including the use of field journal notes to demonstrate credibility.

Triangulation. Ravitch and Carl (2016) inciting Denzin observed that triangulation of data sources can focus on the three aspects of time, space and or person. Data triangulation can, therefore, focus on data collected from different places, or different times of the day and from or about different people. For this study, the triangulation of data considered the new principal's duty stations (rural/urban) for the aspect of space and the aspect of the individuality of the seven principals involved in the study. More importantly, this study emphasized analytical triangulation of the data collected from different people (Denzin, 1978). Given that this study employed only one method of data collection (in-depth semi-structured interviews), data were triangulated

through aggregate analysis without establishing a social linkage between the new principals participating in the study. Besides, a within-method triangulation embedded in the interview questions asked for both narrative and semantic knowledge of IL to establish the principals understanding and mapping the narratives of their experiences to the ideals on IL as documented in literature specifically the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is establishing the equivalent of validity and reliability in quantitative research. Nowell, Norris, White and Moules, (2017) advanced that to conduct, document and evaluate data qualitative research approaches utilize specific techniques. Every individual researcher must assure rigor and trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba, (1985) defined the concept of trustworthiness to include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ravitch and Carl, (2016) also asserted that these criteria guides qualitative researchers to conceptualize, engage with and plan for various aspects of validity. I addressed issues of trustworthiness to ensure the quality and rigor of the study as described below.

Credibility. One criterion to establish trustworthiness is credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is directly concerned with the research design, researchers' instruments, and data considering whether they measure what they intend to measure. Establishing credibility requires a qualitative researcher to consider the validity strategies of persistent observations, prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checks and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To ensure credibility of this

study, I employed the validity strategies of member checks. According to Ravitch and Carl, (2016), member checks are a participant validation strategy. In this study, the principals were engaged to verify the transcripts from the interviews to ensure the accuracy of what was recorded. I also elicited the principals' thoughts and responses to interpretations made from the data for which the participants confirmed that the interpretations were accurate. By using member checks researchers attempt to explore and ascertain if they have or have not understood participants' responses as well as challenge their data collection process and interpretation of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I ensured that each participant got a chance to review their submissions, especially where translation was required from mother-tongue submissions given by the principals.

Transferability. Transferability is yet another way to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research. It is the generalizability of the inquiry or the researchers' demonstration that the research findings apply to other contexts or situations (Merriam, 2009; Nowell et al., 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I addressed transferability in this study, by providing rich/thick descriptions of both the data collection process and data analysis which will allow others to judge the transferability of the study findings. Shenton, (2004) stressed the significance of providing sufficient thick description of the phenomenon being investigated so the readers can have a better understanding to enable comparison of the phenomenon described to their situations.

Dependability. The concept of dependability is the degree to which the study can be replicated with the same methods, participants while the findings remain consistent (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Shenton, 2004). This is related to reliability in qualitative

research. To achieve the dependability of this study, I have documented the research procedures relating to each research question to enable others to replicate the process. Ravitch and Carl, (2016) advised that researchers can achieve dependability through triangulation, sequencing of methods, and a clear definition of the rationale for choices made on data collection for each research question. Moreover, Tobin and Begley, (2004) affirmed that if researchers ensure that the research process is logical, clearly documented and can be traced then the credibility of their research is achieved.

Confirmability. Confirmability in qualitative research refers to findings being based strictly on responses of the participants and are not skewed by researcher bias or motivation. The primary research instrument in this study was the research, I employed a structured reflexivity process to scrutinize the possible biases and prejudices to ensure they are mapped out to maintain awareness on my perspectives when transcribing as well as interpreting the data during analysis. Specifically, I used the strategies of triangulation and writing out reflective memos and I documented decisions and choices made at every stage of the study. I also utilized the set of questions identified by Ravitch and Carl, (2016), on confirmability as a guide for my reflexivity and practiced revisiting responses to each of the questions as many times as possible throughout the research process. This ensured that I kept my biases and possible positionality issues under check and focused on the fidelity of the participants' responses.

Ethical Procedures

As the procedure provides, the first step was obtaining the Walden University IRB approval. For this, I submitted the relevant application to the IRB to seek approval

and permission to access research participants for data collection. I also obtainedpermission from the Ministry of Education and the Regional Education Bureau in Ethiopia before data collection. The Belmont report ethical principles and guidelines formed the main guidance regarding the use of human participants for research. The principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice were upheld throughout this study. As described under the selection of participants section, this study's selection process target a non-vulnerable population and a non-sensitive data collectionprocess. To initiate the research relationships, I explained the purpose of the research to each participant as I sought their consent. Participants willing to participate then signed the consent form as a confirmation. I also informed the participants upfront of the freedom to withdraw at any time if they so wished. Participant withdrawal occurred before interviews were conducted as they declined to sign the consent forms. I then made the decision to seek other participants meeting all participant selection criteria. As a result of participants declining to be interviewed, only seven principals were interviewed instead of the eight originally planned for the study.

Confidentiality and anonymity of data are essential aspects of research. Babbie, (2017) pointed out that confidentiality and anonymity are two techniques that assist researchers to guard and protect research participant interests and well-being. For this study I emphasized confidentiality across all the stages including the data collection process, interviewing of participants, interpretation of data and presenting and reporting of research findings. Specifically, to address the issue of confidentiality and guarantee anonymity of participants identity I used codes for the exclusion of any identifiable

characteristics of both the individual principals and the location of institutions in which they work. All research material both script and audio have been stored and secured with passwords for written and transcribed documents. The audio materials are stored in a lock and key drawer.

Summary

This study's purpose was to explore the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understanding of teacher support for effective instruction. In chapter 3, the research components addressed include an articulation of the research design for the study and the rationale, a description of the researcher's role and the methodology for the study. I also discussed the concept of trustworthiness, ethical procedures and provided a summary of the chapter. Chapter 4 discusses the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the results of the study as collected using face-to- face interviews within a basic qualitative research design. The purpose of the study was to explore the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understanding of how to support teachers to be more effective instructors. This study sought to identify what new principals understand their role to be and the challenges they encounter in practicing IL. The 4 research questions that guided the study included;

RQ1: What are new school principals' understandings of instructional leadership in Ethiopia?

RQ2: How do new principals' practice instructional leadership?

RQ3: How do new principals support teachers to be more effective instructors?

RQ4: What challenges do new principals face in their role as instructional leaders?

Each research question was supported by probes that were used as follow up questions (see appendix for full interview protocol)

This chapter is organized into seven major sections that cover aspects of the data collection and results. The first section is an introduction that reviews the purpose of the study and the research questions. This is followed by a description of the setting of the study. The next section provides details of the demographics of the participants that are thought relevant to the study. The following section discusses the details of data collection. The next section explains the process of data analysis articulating the process

used to move from the data codes to the themes. The component of the evidence of trustworthiness is then described. The results of the study are presented, and the chapter closes with a brief summary and transition to chapter five

Setting

The study was conducted in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. Oromia is one of the largest regional states in Ethiopia strategically surrounding the capital city of Addis Ababa where the regional capital is also situated. The Oromia regional state is divided into 180 woredas (district administrative unit). The study engaged seven Ethiopian new primary school principals from the two woredas of Bishoftu and Sebeta in Oromia region. At the time of data collection there were incidences of civil unrest sporadically happening across the Oromia region raising issues of security and safety which affected easy access to participants for face-to-face interviews. I obtained a list of newly appointed primary school principals meeting participant selection criteria of having been appointed to the position of principal in September 2015 from Oromia Regional Education Bureau (OEB). The study population was planned to include eight new primary school principals identified through a purposeful sample. A participant list was obtained with 16 principals from Bishoftu and Sebeta administrative woredas meeting the criteria of not more than 3 years of service as principals. Only seven participants were interviewed for the study as several potential participants from the overall list of 16 eligible participants declined to sign the consent form.

Demographics

The seven new primary school principals were selected based on the number of years since appointment to the position of primary school principal. The study defined new principals as those who have served in position of principalship for not more than 3 years having been appointed in the academic year beginning September 2015. All the seven principals, two female and five male had experience as classroom teachers before being appointed to the position of primary school principals. Within the Ethiopian education system, schools offering primary school education are in three categories namely primary grade 1-4(1^{st} cycle); Primary 1-8(1^{st}& 2^{nd} cycle); and Alternative Basic Education centers (ABE) grades 1-4 condensed into three years (1^{st} cycle). One principal is in his second school of appointment as principal while six are in their first school of appointment as principals with service of not more than 3 years. The Table below shows details of the participant demographics and school characteristics relevant to the study.

Table 1

Demographic Information on Study Participants

Principal	Gender	Years as teacher	Years as principal	Type of school	School population	Qualification	Subject taught & grades	Additional training on school leadership	Number of teachers in the school
ILP01	M	7	2.5	Rural	467	BA – Science Education	Physics	No	8
ILP02	M	10	1	Rural	612	BA	Chemistry	No	12
ILP03	F	9	2	Rural	97	BA- Civic & Ethical Educ	All preprimary	Yes	3
ILP04	M	2	3	Rural	301	BA- Mother Tongue &PGDT/SL	Afan-oromo (MT)	No	10
ILP05	M	4	2	Semi-urban	600	BA & PGDT/SL	Geography & Env Science	No	10
ILP06	F	12	3	Semi-urban	1896	BA Educ Planning	Not teaching	Yes	43
ILP07	M	10	3	Rural	1085	BA	English	Yes	22

Data Collection

To identify an appropriate research instrument is an important step in qualitative research. In this study, I used semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the new principals for gathering information related to the research questions. I also used a researcher developed interview protocol that included probes used as follow up questions. All seven participants were engaged in the face -to-face interviews. The recruitment procedure was designed to reach out to all principals meeting the criteria with a clear explanation of the study to seek their consent to participate until a sample of eight was obtained. Although the recruitment procedure as defined in chapter 3 was followed, of

the 16 potential participants on the list obtained, seven principals declined to be interviewed after reviewing the consent form with two having been transferred and not in the position of principal thereafter. I discussed the decision to continue with only seven participants with my committee and received their approval. Other unusual circumstances of security and safety concerns resulting from civil unrest in the region also caused my travel to be restricted.

As the researcher, I conducted all the interviews with the new principals in person having made the interview appointments by phone. The interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes. Three interviews were conducted in the principal's office while four of the seven interview participants had to be removed from familiar environments for security and safety reasons as sporadic civil unrests were anticipated in the area. I used an interview guide comprising of open-ended probing questions for each of the four research questions to guide and ensure that a conversational approach was maintained during the interview. All interviews were audio recorded using two reliable devices (a smart phone and an audio recorder) to ensure the data is available for use after the interview session. At the end of each interview I recapped the purpose of the study and confirmed with each participant their continued willingness for me to use the information they had shared during the interview for the study.

Aware of the daunting task of transcribing audio data to script, I searched for a free online transcription service to use. After ten minutes of transcribed material I saw that the script was not understandable. Only the questions I was asking could be understood in script. The on-line app could not transcribe the English accent of the

participants. In addition, some words and phrases were spoken in direct translation of the participants mother tongue and therefore sounded out of structure. The transcription did not reflect what the participants said in the interview. As a result, I transcribed each recorded interview verbatim listening to the meaning being conveyed by the participants while keeping my interpretations at bay. Halcomb and Davidson, (2006) observed that verbatim record of interview brings the researcher close to the data and facilitates data analysis. I noted in each recorded interview the sections by minute and second where mother tongue was used to express an idea and sought translation support for each idea. I also employed a reverse translation process by engaging two translators to transcribe the different audio interviews into the local language and translated each script to English. I then took the local language transcripts and exchanged between the translators for another English translation and then compared the two English translations of the same transcript of each participant from the two translators as well as my own transcription of the section (as I noticed that the participants tended to repeat themselves after speaking in local language). I then shared the transcripts with interview participants for member checking to confirm accuracy of the data transcribed including the translations of the mother tongue excerpts and the interpretations. This confirmed the fidelity of the translations to the participant local language submissions and experiences.

Data Analysis

The strategy used for data analysis as stated in chapter 3 was iterative in nature. Each interview transcript filed in a separate folder was printed in hardcopy for easy review. Having engaged in the manual transcription of the interview data, I reread each

transcript multiple times to become better familiar with the data taking note of my first impressions. I then initiated the process of thematic data analysis by coding each transcript separately. I used a combination of flexible open coding strategies including key-words-in-contexts (KWIC) and in vivo coding. Ryan and Bernard, (2000) posit that researchers use the KWIC technique to identify a concept by looking at how key words in a corpus of text are used by the participants. I considered reflections of words and phrases used by the research participants in context. I also looked for words and phrases that were repeated or directly responded to the keywords in the questions. While coding, each interview scripts I identified and color-coded portions of text considered useful for quotes and substantiation of concepts in both hand and soft copy. I further scrutinized the common codes by comparing across participant responses to ascertain similarity in meaning terminology or if different nuances existed in use of terminology. All first level codes were then merged by research question and edited for similarities and repetitions. These were further grouped into sub- categories related to the meaning or context of the code (phrase) considering whether it is an action, activity, routine, feeling, perception, opinion, role of the principal or relevance to the question or phenomenon of the study. Some of the initial codes were explicitly stated as important by the research participants. Themes emerged as links and connections within and among the categories as I integrated the codes and phrases. No discrepant cases were observed except for aspects that indicated one or two participants did not understand the question even after probing but provided responses and examples already given in response to other questions. At this point with no new information being generated from the participants on a given question

and I considered having reached a point of saturation on that specific aspect and followed on to the next question or concluded the interview.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

It is the duty of the qualitative researcher to establish rigor and trustworthiness of the research study. In this study the criteria for trustworthiness across the sub-categories of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were executed as articulated in chapter 3 I used audit trails to engage in the process of reflexivity through which my thoughts and anxieties and frustrations were noted, most importantly to keep my biases at bay. I practiced transparency with detailed explanations on the purpose of the study and allowed participants to ask questions about the consent form before appending their signature. For each participant, I provided an interval of seven to ten minutes after reading the consent form to allow for decision making on whether to proceed to signature or not. Seven principals declined to sign the consent form and were not interviewed. The process of member checking was done where each participant reviewed their raw transcripts and confirmed or clarified where necessary (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Participants were pleased to confirm that some bits that required translation from mother tongue to English were accurately translated. For these sections of the scripts I used qualified translators in both Amharic and Afan-Oromo language. A reverse translation approach was also used to confirm accuracy. Both the mother tongue scripts, and the English translation were shared with the participants.

Given the use of only interviews as a data source, a within-method data triangulation considering the rural/semi-urban locations of the participants and their

individuality was used reflecting on the narrative responses of the participants (Denzin, 1978). Data triangulations were also enhanced using probes that allowed for clarifications and follow up on participant responses for clarity and depth. The procedures of data analysis followed in this study also ensured triangulation of participant interview responses allowing for emergence of categories and themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A fellow doctoral student reviewed the transcripts as well as the codes, categories and themes to confirm the alignment of the data interpretations.

With the detailed descriptions of the study context, demographics, the data collection and data analysis procedures, I demonstrate the likelihood of the findings of this study being transferable. Whereas the transferability of the information of this study is possible and given the possible replicability of the sampling, the findings may not be generalizable because of the specificity of context and the small sample used however the descriptions provided can allow for comparison with similar contexts.

Dependability of a study is obtained when a study can be replicated following the same methods, participants and findings remain consistent (Babbie, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I have documented the research procedure of the study capturing the details of data processing for each question, triangulation and sequencing of data analysis that provides for dependability.

This study was based on the experiences of a selected number of new principals as the participants of the study. Questions of confirmability were written in cards and displayed above the worktable as a constant reminder to the researcher. The specific questions asked included; Do I have an agenda? Am I imposing it on the data? How can I

keep my agenda out? While processing the data the major reflective question was, would someone else have the same interpretation of this data? This process barred my personal bias from overriding the research findings.

Results

This study set out to explore the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understanding of teacher support for effective instruction. It also sought to identify what new principals understand their role to be and the challenges they encounter in practicing IL. The study was guided by the Practical Ideal type (PIT) microconceptual framework. The PIT microconceptual framework provides that data gathered of a given phenomenon can be gauged against an existing structure allowing what is observed to be compared to what is ideal. The study utilized the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) articulated by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) which identifies specific behaviors of principals that demonstrate the constructs of IL. In addition, the lens of Bandura's concept of self-Efficacy is used to examine participant responses to RQ2 and RQ3 in respect to the interrelation between the principal's practices, their environment, and their cognitive factors and whether the instructional practices are supported by convictions of personal experience in coping with the role of IL.

Research Question 1

Research question one asked; What are new school principals' understandings of IL in Ethiopia? Principals described their understanding of IL by stating what it meant to them when they are referred to as instructional leaders. They were probed to share the

functions of an instructional leader and what they considered important about IL. In analyzing the participant responses for research question 1 the following themes emerged. The principal insights to their understanding of the concept of IL were expressed in terms of the principals' accountability to the different school stakeholders and their responsibilities towards students, teachers, parents, classroom instruction, management of resources and behavior, resolution of conflict and building relationships. The themes that emerged from the data analysis include:

- a focus on students learning,
- accountability for teacher performance,
- strategic monitoring and implementation of plans,
- building relationships among stakeholders, and
- accountability for teaching and learning.

Theme 1. A focus on students learning. New school principals' understanding of IL was expressed as a construct which values student learning. They reported IL as a strategic focus on planning for and supporting students learning. All the principals described their perception on IL to relate directly to students learning. Participant ILP01 stated: "IL is about students, it is the student's learning that is most important" Participant ILP07 also mentioned that IL "is facilitating everything that is needed for student learning in the school and to support the students to excel", while Participant ILP05 asserted that, "IL involves engaging in "instructing, directing, facilitating and helping both the teachers and students"

In their focus on students learning, the new principals also submitted that managing and changing students' behavior as well as providing guidance and counseling to students to achieve good results are aspects that make students learning a focus of IL. Participant ILP02 stated that, "It is about ensuring students gain knowledge. IL requires the principal to focus on students".

Participant ILP01 also affirmed the focus on students by saying "because students are in the school, IL means we need to work with students in mind so that they can achieve good results."

Theme 2. Accountability for teacher performance. Accountability for teachers' performance was identified by all the participants as a function of IL. The new school principals expressed this in several ways articulating it as their responsibility without which learning may be compromised. The sense of responsibility for what and how teachers do their work at school was reflected across the participant responses. Participant ILP07 stated that, "It is my role, if there is a gap among teachers' knowledge or skills. I prepare training for them in those areas. If I cannot train them. I nominate other teachers who have more experience to support the novice teachers to fill the gaps of knowledge in subject content or in pedagogical skills."

Participant ILP01 shared a reflective process in managing teacher performance saying, "I constantly ask, are they teaching the appropriate curriculum content at the right time? My role is to facilitate the work of the teachers and keep the teachers on track". While Principal ILP05 described his accountability for teacher performance to include assigning

classes and providing teaching and learning materials to facilitate the teaching and learning process.

Theme 3. Strategic monitoring and implementation of plans. Monitoring and implementing action plans was also stated as a function of IL. Study participants expressed the understanding that for successful IL to happen there must be focused monitoring of what is planned in the classroom and school as a whole. Strategic monitoring of plans needs to be consistent and frequent. It involves review of students' performance, classroom instruction and teaching strategies. Each principal stressed the significance of strategic monitoring of plans that are implemented by teachers in the classroom. Participant ILP04 stated that, "What is important for IL first is the teaching process. The teacher must prepare for it knowing what should be taught at a given time. I must sign it off. It is my role to monitor this planning". Participant ILP05 also stated that one of the principal's roles in IL is to check teachers' lesson plans. ILP05 went on to say this monitoring is done on a weekly basis. Participant ILP06 also stated that joint planning and monitoring is sometimes done together with the heads of department. Planning therefore is central to what principals do in the school.

Theme 4. Building relationships among stakeholders. A continued exploration of the new principals understanding of IL yielded the perspective that IL involves building good relationships among stakeholders. The new principals affirmed the need to maintain good relationships among school stakeholders especially teachers as an important consideration for good practice of IL. Participant ILP02 stated the following;

> Relationships are important for IL – when there is good relationship between the teachers and principal, and parents we can work together. The students will get what they need if there is a good relationship between the teachers, leaders and the parents committee.

Considered within the principal instructional management rating scale, good relationships meant to support students learning would relate to promoting a positive school learning climate. Participant ILP05 stated that "an instructional leader is concerned about how new teachers and students are oriented to the ways (culture) of the school". ILP05 went on to say, "In practicing IL the principal does not have to be a dictator, he does not command the teachers. For the benefit of the students, he discusses and agrees with the teachers. I understand IL in this respect."

Principal ILP06 also stated that, "for me how I wanted to be appreciated as a teacher, is what I do for my teachers. I must see what is good and appreciate it and make corrections through discussions with the teacher concerned". ILP03 emphasized, "It is important that we in the staff are friends and understand each other. That makes it possible to support teaching and learning of our students." It appears that the new principals in this study value maintaining good relationships between the teachers, students and the principal and although it is not a direct definition of their understanding of IL, they identify it as a function of an instructional leaders.

Theme 5. Accountability for the teaching and learning process. The principals' understanding of IL as an accountability for the teaching and learning process indicates the focus on managing instructional programs. The new principals understand

management of the instructional process as a fundamental facet of IL. Principal ILP07 stated that, “the teaching process is central to IL.” ILP07 went on to say the following;

> The teaching process is not easy, teachers need feedback from the principal. All teachers do not have the same classroom performance, they need the leaders help because all teachers do not have the same experience. You can give feedback again and again. In the end if the teachers plan and teach properly the students can get what they need.

ILP04 stated that, “My understanding is that IL helps the leader to guide the school, especially the teachers on how to use their time and the resources in general. I understand like that’. While ILP01 explained that, it means facilitating the learning and teaching process for the students and staff and the middle managers and stressed that it is to facilitate the education process in the school.” Overall, the participants understanding of the concept of IL emphasized the principal’s role and responsibility to the teaching and learning process.

In summary, research question one focused on what the new school principals understand by IL. The participants interpretative meanings (ontologies) ascribed to their understanding of IL relate to functions that enhance student learning, the accountability of the principal for teacher performance, strategies for monitoring and implementation of action plans, ensuring good relationships, managing school resources and accountability for the teaching and learning process.

Research Question 2

Research question two asked; How do new principals' practice IL? Through this question, the study sought to explore what the new principals do in their schools that demonstrate IL. The principals were also asked to identify what among the practices of IL they thought easy or challenging. From the interview data, three themes emerged that illustrated the common practices the new principals demonstrate as IL practice. These themes include:

- managing and monitoring of teaching and learning,
- engendering collegiality and collaboration, and
- maintaining a conducive school environment.

Theme 1. Managing and monitoring teaching and learning. Management and monitoring of the teaching and learning process was considered an important practice. Literature highlights that when principals work with teachers on functions regarding curriculum and instruction it falls under the dimension of instructional management (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The new principals reported engaging in guiding and managing teacher time on task, providing the required teaching and learning materials, ensuring effective and regular planning for teaching, conducting lesson observations, and ensuring accuracy of academic and curriculum activities. All the seven principals stressed that managing teacher time on task, monitoring teaching schedules and coordinating training are routine functions in their practice of IL. ILP07 explained that

> What I do first is to check if all lessons notes are correct, after that I check how the class is done [actual lesson presentation] -good or bad. I give feedback for correction

Other participants described practices that included conducting lessons observations to monitor instruction, providing instructional materials to teachers in a timely manner, conducting student tutorials (catchup classes) to support teachers and acting as role models by taking up lessons directly to demonstrate good teaching to the teachers especially novice teachers.

According to the interview data, new principals also highlighted the management of school resources as a practice of IL. They observed that both human and material resources are important and a critical function of IL. Participant ILP02 stated that, "the principal facilitates everything about finances -lack of finances or about the issue of other materials like chairs, black boards, chalk, textbooks and other materials that are needed for the teaching and learning process." Participants also observed that, whereas management of resources is important, it is also difficult when the resources are hard to come by and therefore makes it difficult to provide the required IL.

Theme 2. Engendering collegiality and collaboration. Principal practices that nurture collegiality and collaboration featured in several responses of the interview data. Principals assert that ensuring discussions with, among and between teachers is important in enhancing teacher collaboration. If teachers must work and focus on students learning, leaders need to provide support for them to talk and work together (Shah, 2012). ILP01 stated,

> that, being in harmony with teachers, discussing with them so that challenges are resolved for change to be achieved in students' learning is important. We work in collaboration and together we bring change in the school. We collaborate for improved students' learner achievement.

ILP06 also explained that, "I go to class with the head of department to observe lessons. After which we provide feedback to the teacher. This how we collaborate on this work". Participant ILP05 expressed the importance of consultation and collaboration by sharing an experience saying,

> When a principal discusses and agrees with the teachers and the students, it makes leadership possible. But if there is no agreement it becomes a challenge. I faced this great challenge when I just began as a principal. I did not listen to my teachers' ideas. I assumed my ideas were correct, but I was wrong. After having the leadership training, I understood that discussion is mandatory. Now, I listen to them and I make corrections. We can do more when we work together, collaboration is important.

Through collaboration teachers share knowledge and reflect on teaching practices and provide collegial support to each other (Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015). The collaboration aspect is extended to the engagement of the school community and parents. Most of the study participants also identified their role in engaging the community as a practice related to IL. Participant ILP02 observed that, "I work to collaborate with the community to ensure regular attendance and to identify ways to reduce student dropout"

Participants also mentioned that IL is possible when students collaborate with both the teachers and the parents.

Theme 3. Maintaining a conducive school environment. Some aspects of maintaining a conducive school environment were suggested as participants underscored the need for good student and teacher behavior and discipline at school. The participants observed that management of discipline among the school stakeholders is an accountability of the principal in IL. Counseling and managing student and teacher behavior featured as a common practice that all the principals engage in on a regular basis. According to Hallinger and Murphy (1985) dealing with norms and attitudes of teachers and students that impact learning in the school are functions of IL that promote a positive school learning climate.

The new principals also seemed to agree that managing discipline in school is a demanding responsibility for principals but also stressed that without discipline in the school compound effective student learning would not occur, hence their consideration of this role as a function of IL. Hinged on that perception participant ILP02 observed that, "Principals must resolve issues or problems of discipline whether with students or teachers. It takes time and sometimes I cannot do any other thing when it is serious. It is the principal's role to maintain peace in the school compound for good learning to happen."

Participant ILP07 also shared that, "a lot of time is spent on solving parent or community problems at the school. The community complains when students behave badly. As a

principal I must solve these problems very quickly so that the students can continue to learn. This is part of my job as an instructional leader to facilitate learning at school."

Finally, the second research question delved on practices that new principals considered as demonstrating their role as instructional leaders. As the data illustrates, the new principal practices ranged from the roles they undertook as leaders to provide a school environment that facilitates learning and stimulates teacher collaboration to actual solving of problems that would otherwise impact the learning environment. Without the principals' commitment to managing and monitoring the teaching and learning process, enhancing collaboration among teachers and ensuring a conducive school environment, their practices might only remain routines of school leadership rather than functions that promote IL.

Research Question 3

To understand further what new principals' practices of IL are, research question 3 explored how the principals support their teachers to be effective instructors. Each participant described the support they provided to the teaching and learning process. The accounts illustrated how often they engaged with the teachers to ensure effective instruction revealing that principals focused on two major areas including;

- establishing teacher support strategies, and
- district guidelines.

Theme 1: Teacher support strategies- "what I needed is what they need".

One theme that resonated across the interview responses for question 3 as participants described whether their teaching experiences prepared them for the role of instructional

leaders or not. The expression “what I needed as a teacher is what the teachers need” was notable. Participants reported that their experiences as teachers enabled them to recognize what teachers needed to deliver good instruction. Principals drew a lot on their own experiences and feelings of being classroom teachers highlighting aspects of self-efficacy that contributed elements of positive performance. With this understanding, the principals strive to provide teacher support as best as they can within the contexts of their individual schools. Data revealed that the teacher support strategies included; support for teacher pedagogical knowledge, classroom management skills; timely provision of teaching resources; and support to manage personal problems bound to interfere with teaching roles. Participant ILP07 shared that, “For me and my team, we conduct classroom observation twice in a semester. Through that we identified four teachers with challenges in teaching. I personally worked with these four teachers and now there is improved practice in teaching”. ILP07 went on to substantiate that, “for this I reflected on my experience as a teacher to provide support. My experience as a teacher was very useful”. Participants perceived their experiences as teachers played a big role in what support they offered to the teaching staff. Study participants reported taking lessons to demonstrate effective instruction and classroom management strategies to the teachers. Participant ILP02 also stated that,

> Some teachers do not have the knowledge of teaching methods and subject content. So, I take lessons, to demonstrate to them what to do. When I was a teacher, I wanted this from my principal, so I have to give this support to my teachers.

All the new principals also noted that supporting the teachers to resolve some of their personal problems ensured that the teachers were committed to their jobs. They reported that as a strategy the principal must demonstrate understanding when a teacher is going through some personal challenging situations. The new principals valued their ability to respond to these needs by promoting a culture of care among the staff.

Theme 2: District guidelines. Another way the principals engage with the teachers was in relation to providing information or data in response to district guidelines and checklists. The principals noted the importance of following the set guidelines and checklists from the education bureau. The principals observed that their support for effective instruction in the school must be within these guidelines. Data revealed that where the principals highlighted supporting teachers, they also emphasized that they were more concerned about their reporting obligations to the education bureau hence the checklists needed to be appropriately filled and reports submitted in time. ILP01 stated that,

> My role is to ensure the guidelines and checklist are followed. I refer to the guidelines repeatedly. I also consult with principals of other schools with experience on the guidelines. A good principal must read the guidelines and fill the checklist correctly. Guidelines come from the woreda (district) and regional education bureau.

Principal ILP07 shared, “we are supposed to work according to the checklist that is mandatory. It takes time, to report on that check list. When the supervisors come, they ask for the progress on the checklist. My support to teachers should follow the guidelines

overall". The sense of responsibility to follow the district guidelines was articulated repeatedly by most participants. The principals valued adherence to the guidelines as it determined how their leadership would be rated or rewarded by the district or regional education offices. ILP0 4 reported that, "I have to take time to write the reports for education office- checklist is a must weekly and monthly, it takes time". Hallinger and Murphy (1987), observe that for most districts, IL is not a priority rather principals need to demonstrate managerial efficiency and political stability because promotions to management positions are seldom related to IL potential.

Lastly, although the new principals expressed that the district guidelines was a complementary role and guided their support to teachers, they alluded to this role as consuming a lot of their time. Nevertheless, the new principals' confidence in what worked for them before as teachers being a valued guide to their decisions on how they provided instructional support, confirms the role of self-efficacy as an anchor for an individual's ability to deal with potential situations.

Research Question 4

For research question four, participants were asked what challenges they face in their role as instructional leaders. The study participants reported being confronted by the lack of adequate resources to support effective instruction, the low capacity and lack of teachers, challenging learning environments, long distance for teachers, high teacher turn over, lack of supervisory support from the local education authorities and the mandate to report and provide filled checklists to the education authorities on a regular basis. The

multiplicity of the challenges that the study participants enumerated yielded four major themes included the following:

- Lack of teachers
- Limited time
- Limited knowledge and training
- Scarce resources

Theme 1: Lack of teachers. Six out of the seven study participants reported that they had lessons to teach, some in several classes making it difficult to provide support to the teachers. Participant ILP02 stated that, “In my school, I don’t have enough teachers. I have to teach many lessons, there is no time to support the teachers in the classroom. When I plan to observe one teacher, some children have no teacher so, I cannot support the teachers enough.” Principal ILP01, also reported that “I teach three periods every week and sometimes one period is lost when I have to facilitate other things for parents or others” Participant ILP06 echoed a similar situation that, “my plans and programs sometimes don’t get done because of other programs.”. ILP06 went on to say, “even when you go to solve school problem of lack of teachers or materials with education office, it can be going for two days lobbying at the education offices”. Participants spoke of facing multiples challenges which they think requires the support of the education authorities.

The challenges they faced the principals observed, were difficult to manage and deliver on their roles and responsibilities as expected. Principal ILP02 shared that, “I have many activities and discussions with parents of the students and without a deputy I am not able to conduct lesson observation to support teachers”. While participant ILP03

narrated that, “My home is very far from the school, it’s a new school, there are a lot of shortages, it lacks text-books and even furniture. ILP03 went on to say, “when I am late in arriving no class sessions happen. It is difficult to do IL.”

Teacher turnover was also expressed as one challenge that principals face in their role as instructional leaders. Participant ILP07 summed it up by saying that, “to ensure good IL happens, I need teachers in the school on time but the high teacher turnover complicates my role.”

Theme 2: Limited time. Participants recognized that effective IL happens with the direct engagement of the school principal through guiding, facilitating and monitoring instructional activities in the school. Giving less attention to factors that promote effective instruction in the classroom as forced by other roles was articulated by all participants. Participant ILP02 stated that,

> “I spend time attending to cases of indiscipline among students. Sometimes, I spend a lot of time on the phone explaining what is working and what is not working in the school when the bureau wants immediate reporting. This keeps me away from what I should be doing to support teachers.”

Principal ILP03 also explained that, “After teaching my lessons, I have to cover for teachers who might be absent, and the students are seated idle in class. ILP03 also went on to say, “sometimes even with a plan, it is not implemented because I have to go to the Kebele (local administrative unit) to lobby for school allocations.”

Theme 3: Limited knowledge and training: Lack of specialized training on leadership in general and IL was reported by all study participants as a constraint to their practice.

The principals highlighted that specialized training on aspects of IL is necessary to be an effective instructional leader. They indicated the need for mentoring support from experienced principals. Five of the seven principals stated that although they had a postgraduate diploma in school leadership they would benefit from some specialized training on IL. They observed that the diploma course they have undertaken did not prepare them adequately for IL. Participants reported a big gap between the theory they learnt about school leadership in general and the demands of IL. Participant ILP06 stated that, "What we learnt in training we cannot find it on the ground. It is very different at school level and it is scary" while ILP03 noted, "I cannot apply the book knowledge in my school. It is different completely". Principal ILP02 also observed, "The main challenge is that we do not have information on leadership because I graduated in another field, but I am a leader. I wish to learn more about leadership.

ILP02 went on to say that,

> "Most of the principals have specialty in subject areas and not leadership. For instance, I am a physics teacher with no leadership training. Unless I take a summer training course for leadership. But also, the learning in the summer course does not address the reality on the ground, it is theory".

Principals emphasized the need for some specialized knowledge and training on IL. It is an important aspect of principal preparation for effective practice at school level they noted. Data revealed that although the principals hold a post graduate diploma in school leadership they relied more on their teaching experiences to support their teachers suggesting that the training may have been more theoretical and distanced from their

experiences, hence they were in a new role without tools to do the job. Participant ILP07 pointed out that, “It is good to get promotion but there is need for specialized training for this role. I got promotion from teacher to principal without preparation, even principals need support and training.” ILP04 also stated that, “My experience as a teacher gives me good knowledge but I need more knowledge and skill to be a good instructional leader.” Participant ILP05 also observed that, “the experience as a teacher is very good but not enough to be an effective principal because the role is different. I need knowledge on how to develop a school, how to support teachers improve instruction.”

Furthermore, all participants interviewed expressed the need for peer support and coaching at the beginning of a leadership career. The value of peer coaching in developing skills and practice is undisputable. Participants recognized that peer coaching provides a friendly learning environment that helps those participating to engage in self-directed learning. Principal ILP03 stated, “I think that as a new principal I can benefit if I learn from the experienced principal in my region.” Participant ILP05 also observed that,

> As a new principal, I would have appreciated working with an experienced principal of five to ten years, working with him or her for two or three weeks, to see leadership in practice before starting off in my own school”. The participant went on to say, “I would then continue to be in contact with my mentor for any challenges I meet in my school. But it is not the case. Principal ILP05 wondered, if the education system could organize peer coaching and mentoring for new principals.

Participant reported seeking support from the principals they worked with before especially where good relationships had been built avoiding practices, they felt did not promote students learning.

Theme 4: Scarce resources. Lack of adequate resources to support effective instruction. Instruction in the classroom must be supported by appropriate teaching and learning materials. School principals are responsible for provision of teaching and learning resources for teachers. The new principals highlight this aspect as a constraint to the support they can provide to teachers. Participant ILP04 observed that, "my challenge in supporting IL is lack of resources" while principal ILP03 also stressed that, "it is difficult to support teachers when materials are scarce." The new principals consistently highlighted the inability to provide appropriate teaching and learning resources in a timely manner as deterrent to effective IL support to teachers. Notably, the analysis of the interview data does not present any specific discrepant data except for a few instances where two participants misunderstood the questions but with further probing were able to share their experiences focused on instructional support.

Summary

This study was conducted using a basic qualitative research design that explored what the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals are and their understanding of teacher support for effective instruction. Through an in-depth analysis of the new principals' experiences gathered through face-to-face interviews, the study sought to answer the following four research questions:

RQ1-What are new school principals' understandings of instructional leadership in Ethiopia?

RQ2- How do new principals' practice instructional leadership?

RQ3- How do new principals support teachers to be more effective instructors?

RQ4- What challenges do new principals face in their role as instructional leaders?

Data on each research question revealed a set of constructs that explained the understandings, experiences, practices and challenges of new principals in their efforts to provide IL in their schools. Data for question one suggests that new principals understand important constructs of IL to include, students learning as the focus of IL; principal accountability for teacher performance; strategic monitoring and implementation of plans; building good relationships among school stakeholders; and accountability for the teaching and learning process. The data also suggests that the new principal practices of IL centered on management and monitoring of the teaching and learning process; engendering collegiality and collaboration; and maintaining a conducive school environment. On research question 3 about what support principals provide teachers to ensure effective instructions, the data revealed that new principals focus on two main areas including; establishing teacher support strategies and ensuring accountability for institutional guidelines. Lastly data analysis on challenges the new principals encounter in their practice of IL revealed that principals face challenges in three major areas related to; little time and oversight for IL; lack of specialized training on IL upon appointment and lack of adequate resources to support effective instruction.

The conceptual framework chosen for the study required the integration of the practical Ideal type using the principal instructional management rating scale (PIMRS) and Bandura's self-efficacy theory to categorize the themes drawn from the results in an attempt to explain the depth of the principals' understanding and practice of IL. The study findings are treated as the "practical" aspects on the principal understandings and practices compared with the "Ideal" which is the PIMRS. The PIMRS framework developed by Hallinger and Murphy, (1985), is a reputable tool that researchers have used in different contexts to assess the instructional behaviors and practices of school principals. The framework outlines three major dimensions of IL under which ten different leadership functions are defined as detailed in figure two below.

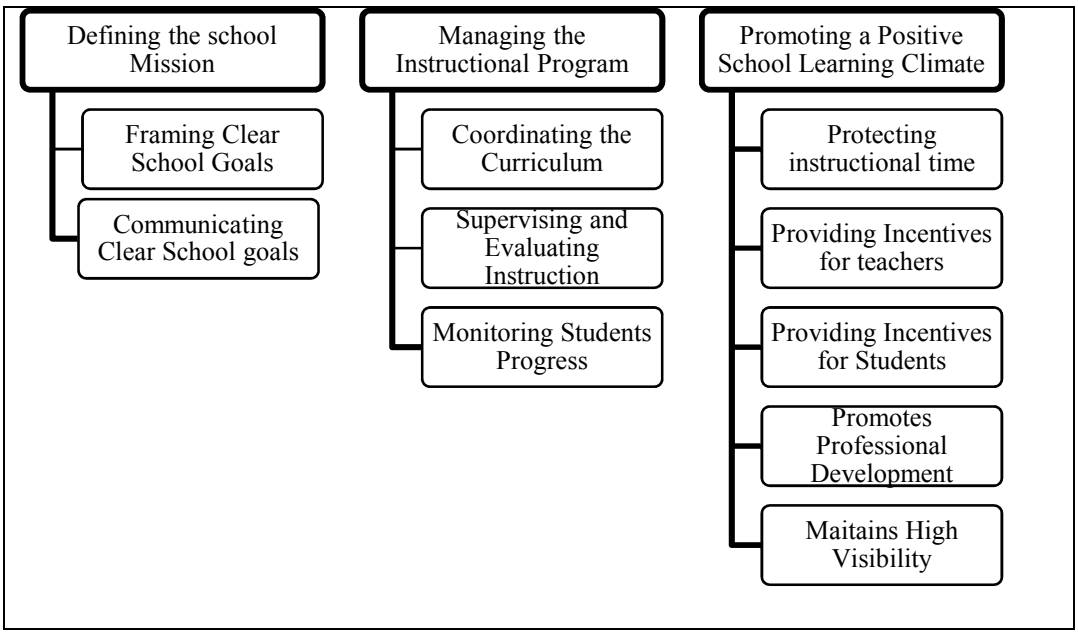

Figure 1. The PIMRS conceptual framework. Adapted from Hallinger, and Murphy. (1985). Assessing and developing instructional leadership in schools, *Elementary School Journal, 86*(2), 217-248.

Overall, the interview data revealed that the principals understand IL from the perspective of the two dimensions of managing the instructional program and creating a positive climate only. While some aspects of self-efficacy were established, no understanding of the first dimension of defining the school mission which includes the functions of framing and communicating clear school goals was demonstrated.

Chapter 5 addresses the interpretation of findings and conclusion of the study. It also provides the recommendations, limitations and the study's implications for social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Through this qualitative basic study, I sought insight into the new primary school principals' understanding and practices of IL based on their own perceptions, experiences, and practices. The purpose of the study was to explore the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals and their understanding of how to support teachers to be more effective instructors. I sought to identify what new principals understand their role is and the challenges they encounter in practicing IL. The new principals were defined as those who had been newly appointed to the position of school principal and served for not more than 3 years.

The conceptual framework for this study was the PIT, which provides that data gathered of a given phenomenon can be gauged against an existing structure allowing for comparison with what is ideal. Themes drawn from the new principals' perceptions, personal experiences and descriptions were compared to the PIMRS, a framework developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), as the ideal. Self-efficacy theory is used to interpret the experiences of the school principals to understand whether there was interrelation between the principals' reported practice and their prior engagement as classroom teachers.

Through this study, I sought to fill the gaps in understanding and practice of new principals relating to IL in their first 3 years of principal-ship in a developing African country context. Data for this study was collected through face-to-face in-depth interviews with the purposefully selected participants. Interview sessions lasting between

45 and 60 minutes, were audio taped and transcribed supported by expert translations of mother tongue excerpts of the study participants. The four questions that formed the interview protocol included:

RQ1: What are new school principals' understandings of instructional leadership in Ethiopia?

RQ2: How do new principals' practice instructional leadership?

RQ3: How do new principals support teachers to be more effective instructors?

RQ4: What challenges do new principals face in their role as instructional leaders?

Key findings of this study revealed several themes as presented in chapter four. The thematic analysis highlighted that for RQ1 the new principals understand IL to mean roles, responsibilities and actions that refer to (a) a focus on students' learning, (b) principal accountability for teacher performance, (c) strategic monitoring and implementation of plans, (d) building good relationships among school stakeholders, and (e) accountability for the teaching and learning process. For RQ2 three themes emerged in relation to the principal practices of IL to include (a) managing and monitoring of teaching and learning, (b) engendering collegiality and collaboration, and (c) maintaining a conducive school environment. Two major themes emerged from RQ3 regarding principal support to teachers which included (a) establishing teacher support strategies, and (b) Ensuring accountability for district guidelines. RQ4 addressing the challenges new principals face in their role as instructional leaders yielded four major challenges of shortage of teachers, limited time, limited knowledge and training and scarce resources.

Interpretation of the Findings

New Principal Understanding of Instructional Leadership. The understanding that students' learning is the focus of IL highlights a very important paradigm for the new principals. Identified as a central reason for IL in the literature, students' learning is an important component of the dimension of managing instructional programs (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). Principals have the responsibility to ensure teachers focus on student achievement (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). Study participants not only described IL as a strategic focus on planning for and supporting students learning but also as ensuring students' achievement. Moreover, they indicated that counseling and motivating students to learn are some constructs that make student learning a focus of IL. These findings largely confirm the combined outcomes of the principal functions of managing curriculum and instruction and providing incentives for learners as defined in the work of Hallinger and Murphy in the principal instructional management rating scale. Researchers assert that principals should be increasingly involved in curriculum and instructional management as a strategy for achieving good students' performance (Bush, 2014; Kremer et al., 2013; Ng et al., 2015). This data confirms the findings in the literature that principals' IL impacts students' learning and should directly influence the teaching and learning process (Bryk et al., 2010; Bush, 2014; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Furthermore, the findings highlight that accountability for teacher performance is an important role of an instructional leader. Pietsch and Tulowitzki, (2017) assert that principals engaged in designing and implementing curriculum, instruction and assessment

practices have a strong influence on teacher classroom practices. IL is about the quality of teaching in the classrooms (Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017); and to manage the instructional program, the principal needs to know the demands of teaching and learning (Gawlik, 2018). The results indicate that ensuring quality teacher performance is a significant responsibility for the principal as an instructional leader. Monitoring teacher performance and behavior, allocating and managing teacher work-loads, facilitating classroom instruction and provision of teaching and learning materials are mechanism through which principals account for teacher performance in effective classroom instruction. According to Pietsch and Tulowitzki, (2017), principals who are directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices get to influence the classroom practices of their teachers. Accountability for teacher performance therefore is a critical role for the principal in IL which links to the function of supervising and evaluating instruction within the second dimension of the PIMRS. This indicates concurrence between the study findings and findings in literature that affirm the influence of IL on the teaching and learning process (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Walker & Hallinger, 2015).

Oversight for Teacher Performance and Collaboration. Moreover, the principal's responsibility to protect instructional time, monitor and implement professional development for teachers demonstrates accounting for teacher performance. Sebastian et al., (2016) observe that principals who engage teachers to improve the learning environment; support school program alignment and manage professional development demonstrate IL. The study findings indicate that the new principals

considered the issues of managing teacher time on task, strategic monitoring of teacher schedules and coordinating the training of teachers as important aspects of IL. The findings corroborate with the ideal functions of IL as described within the dimension of creating a positive school climate in the PIMRS.

Furthermore, strategic monitoring and implementation of lesson plans was emphasized as a function of IL. Bartolini et al., (2014) assert that organizational and planning skills are necessary strategies for principals to employ in supporting teachers. Jita, (2010) also stressed that planning, collaboration, dialogue and personal engagement with teachers are tasks for IL. Data from the study revealed that the principals understood IL to mean engaging in activities such as overseeing teacher planning done daily, weekly, monthly and annually as well as within departments. They collectively emphasized that monitoring of what is planned in the classroom and school leads to successful ILs. These findings concur with the available literature on the importance of principal support to teacher planning and monitoring classroom instruction which directly influences the teaching and learning process (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Building and maintaining good relationships among school stakeholders was expressed as foundational to effective IL. According to Wieczorek and Manard, (2018) relationship and building trust among school community members supports the principals' effort for visibility and engagement. The findings align with the literature for creating and promoting a positive school climate as a dimension of IL referring to norms and attitudes of the staff and students (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Participants also included the parent teachers' association (PTA) as a group to engage and maintain a good

relationship with for successful IL to prevail. This finding is consistent with previous research by Wieczorek and Manard, (2018) affirming that for school principals to maintain high visibility as a function of IL they should have a good understanding of community expectations.

The management of instructional process is a fundamental facet of IL. Accounting for the teaching and learning process is a role that the principals must undertake as instructional leaders (Sisman, 2016). Researchers have highlighted the role of managing teaching and learning as critical to IL (Gawlik, 2018; Gordon et al., 2017; Hallinger et al., 2016; Hallinger et al., 2017; Hallinger et al., 2015; Sisman, 2016). Study findings indicated that managing the teaching and learning process was central to what participants routinely did in their schools. Similarly, the findings were comparable to confirm their understanding of managing instructional processes as a component of IL assenting to the cited work of Hallinger et al., (2015), which underscore active involvement of principals in walkthroughs; conducting classroom observations; and follow up meetings with individual teachers or departmental meetings for feedback on lesson observation.

The gap in research literature on the IL understandings and practices of new school principals in Ethiopia was the driving force behind the study. It was unclear what new principals understood as IL and what practices they undertook to implement IL at the beginning of their careers as principals. Moreover, the findings indicate that the new principals in the study were not aware that defining the school mission is a significant component of IL. According to Nguyen et al., (2018) articulating, communicating and

coordinating support for implementing the mission of the school is the responsibility of the school principal and is a significant dimension of instructional learning. Also agreeing with Kemp et al., (2014) assertion that developing, sustaining and conserving the school mission is the principal's role including inspiring and motivating others to pursue the school mission. Whereas, this might mean a difference in perception, there was a patent gap in the principals' understanding of the first dimension of IL. Not even in the practices did the participants mention engaging in any activities relating to the functions of framing and communicating clear school goals. The finding concurs with the literature stating that there is limited research on the experiences and practices of new principals as they practice IL in schools in the African context (Almarshad, 2017; Gumus et al., 2018). However, the research is not only scanty on new principals' understanding and practices, but also narrow in comprehension of IL activities (Gumus et al., 2018). To fill this gap in understanding and most likely practice will be an element to contribute to positive social change action.

New Principal Practice of Instructional Leadership. Principals practices of IL was a second construct of the study. Like their understanding of IL, all the principals described activities and practices that demonstrated their involvement in managing and monitoring classroom instruction. The findings revealed that principals routinely engaged in managing teacher schedules, providing teaching and learning materials, guiding teacher planning, observing lessons and monitoring accuracy of academic and curriculum activities. Research has adequately documented why principal practices in managing and monitoring teaching and learning are important. The study findings concur with cited

literature that principals' engagement in the management and monitoring of the instructional process impacts teachers' efficacy (Bellibas & Liu, 2017). Similar to Gawlik's, (2018) assertion that school principals must be well-informed about the demands of teaching and learning, which only happens when they engage in it.

Principal practices of IL should also focus on engendering collegiality and collaboration within the school. Effective schools develop teachers by promoting collaboration for improved teaching and learning (Orphanos & Orr, 2014). Previous research indicates that teacher involvement in collaborative activities is predicated by support received from the principal (Castro et al., 2017). The participants in this study confirmed the need for collegiality and collaboration between teachers and the school principal citing aspects that emphasize the focus of principals' and teachers' work on improving student performance. These include consultations among teachers, negotiating teachers' workload, teamwork, collaboration and shared understanding of roles and responsibilities are ways study participants created and enhanced collegiality and collaboration with the school community. This confirms assertions in the existing literature that the most impactful leadership practices are those that support teachers in their work and professional development (Marfan & Pascual, 2018); and that high performing school principals demonstrate practices that foster teamwork and collaboration directed to improving student learning outcomes (Aydin et al., 2017).

It is noted that whereas the study participants emphasized building relationships is significant, the literature on IL does not specifically mention building relationships or collaboration as a function of IL yet it could be a role within the dimension of creating a

positive school climate. Hence, whether scholars in this field agree that building relationships among the school stakeholders especially teachers, students and the principal is a function of IL, this study seems to have highlighted that building good relationships makes a strong contribution to principals' practice of IL.

Maintaining a conducive school environment was emphasized as a practice that demonstrates IL. A principal's provision of a supportive, safe, positive learning and work environment and a good school culture are important components of IL (Salo et al., 2015). The literature cited in chapter two points out several practices through which principals demonstrate creating a positive school climate and justify why it is an important IL dimension. Researchers emphasize that a conducive school climate influences: school effectiveness, curriculum and instructional development (Setwong & Prasertcharoensuk, 2013); positive feelings of job satisfaction and self-efficacy among teachers (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016); engages the community of educators including teachers in creating a good learning climate is important (Sebastian et al., 2016; Thapa et al., 2013); and the building of a trusting relationship with teachers begins with creating a professional learning climate (Cherkowski, 2016). Whereas the study findings on motivating teaches and students support the work of Hallinger and Murphy, (1985) on the climate dimension, the participants emphasis on managing student and teacher discipline, and resolving conflicts among stakeholders as practices of IL seems relevant aspects to expand the functions of the climate dimension especially in the African contexts.

Instructional Support for Teachers. Principal support for effective instruction needs to be supported by establishment of teacher support strategies and ensuring

accountability for district guidelines. According to Day and Sammons, (2014), creating a productive working environment for teachers includes promoting stability and strengthening the school infrastructure. For this to happen there should be appropriate staffing, monitoring and support to teachers and protecting teaching time (Day & Sammons, 2014). The participants interviewed described their teacher support strategies to include support for teacher pedagogical knowledge in which they engaged in classroom demonstrations. Principals described demonstrating and supporting classroom management skills especially for novice teachers. They also reported that timely provision of teaching resources and support to manage personal problems bound to interfere with the teachers teaching roles were some of the support strategies they employed. Moreover, corroborating with the existing literature that leadership makes a significant impact on teachers and teaching (Day & Sammons, 2014); and that leadership behavior of principals generate among teachers' feelings of being valued and respected resulting into teacher commitment (Dutta & Sahney, 2016).

Moreover, study participants also alluded to drawing on their personal experiences and feelings to guide their actions in providing support to teachers especially experiences that were either not met while they were classroom teachers or convictions of personal effectiveness that were considered supportive hence statements such as " what I needed is what they[teachers] need". In addition, elements of self-efficacy described in the teaching experiences and feelings of the principals are recognized as contributing to positive performance. Self-efficacy initiates copying behavior boosted by accomplishments and experiences of an individual (Bandura, 1977, 1994); besides self-

efficacy enhances the collaboration between an individual's behavior, their environment, and their cognitive factors to undertake an activity (Artino, 2012; Gavora, 2010). The findings of the research supported the knowledge documented in the literature review and confirm the assertions of Banduras self-efficacy theory as the principals drew on their positive experiences and in some cases their needs as teachers to guide their teacher support actions as principals.

Accountability for district guidelines revealed participant experiences on a contextual factor that impacts on how principals provide leadership support at school level. All seven principals emphasized the role in of responding to district reporting was mandatory. Although the principals reported the use of the checklist as a practice that supports teachers when asked to illustrate how through filling the checklist teacher instruction is supported, principals did not provide a definite response that can be linked to IL support to teachers. Hallinger, and Murphy, (1987) referred to this as district expectations through which the district prioritize managerial and political stability over IL. Reviewed against the principal instruction management rating scale, district expectations seem not to fall under any of the dimensions or functions of IL, however it remains relevant to the study as it explains some complimentary roles and functions of principals besides IL.

Challenges in Instructional Leadership Practice. Data from the study also revealed that, like all practitioners' principals meet challenges in their practice of IL. Their ability to manage the challenges determines their efforts to establish effective practices within the school. According to Weinstein et al., (2018) the school climate must

support principal practice rather than compound the challenges in leadership practice. Although the principals have a general understanding of the concept of IL, their perceptions and practices are limited to functions of the dimensions of managing the instructional program and creating a positive school climate. The new principals did not demonstrate an understanding of the critical dimension of defining the school mission nor did they describe any practices related to the functions of framing and communicating clear school goals.

Reflective of Sisman's, (2016) research, all study participants highlight the lack of knowledge; minimum time for supervision of instruction; lack of capacity to monitor the curriculum and lackingadequate resources in the school as aspects that impact their ability to provide effective IL. The findings also extend knowledge in the leadership field by revealing the specific gap in knowledge being related to the first dimension of defining the school mission including the functions of framing and communicating school goals on students learning achievement. Moreover, the findings add to the field an understanding of IL from the perspective of new principals specific to the beginning of their careers in a developing African country context. Noting the literature that highlights new principals in Africa lack preparation for leadership; hardly get sufficient induction or in-service training; and manage schools under challenging situations (Bush & Glover, 2013; Bush & Oduro, 2006; Hoadley et al., 2009). Whereas the findings may present limited generalizability, for Ethiopia they illuminate the level of understanding, practice and the challenges new primary school principals face in providing IL.

Study Findings and the Conceptual Framework. In addition, scrutinizing the findings through the lens of the study's conceptual framework, reveals gaps in both understanding and practice of the new principals. The conceptual framework that supports this study required the integration of the practical ideal type using the principal instructional management rating scale (PIMRS) and Bandura's self-efficacy theory. The integration is used to categorize the themes of the study so as to explain the depth of principal understanding and practice of IL. The study findings are treated as the "practical" aspects on the principal understandings and practices compared with the "Ideal" which is the PIMRS. The intent to align the findings to the principal instructional rating scale was meant to disclose what principals know and do and identify what they may not know or do that is critical for effective practice of IL. Conspicuously, the findings reveal that the new principals understand IL from the perspective of the two dimensions of managing the instructional programs and creating a positive climate only, while also demonstrating some aspects of self-efficacy that bear on the new principal's practice of IL. However, no understanding of the first dimension of defining the school mission which involves framing and communicating clear school goals was demonstrated. This indicates a gap in both understanding and practice of instruction leadership by the new principals. The table below illustrates the study alignment to the conceptual framework.

Table 2

Study Findings and Conceptual Framework Alignment Table

The PIRMS Dimensions and functions- "The ideal"	Study Themes/findings "The practical"	Self-Efficacy	Research Questions
Defining the School Mission - Framing clear school goals - Communicating clear school goals	No participant responses related to this dimension	Not applicable	1, 2 &3
Managing the Instructional Program - Supervising and evaluating instruction - Monitoring students' performance - Coordinating curriculum	- A focus on students learning - Accountability for teacher performance - Strategic monitoring and implementation of plans - Managing and monitoring teaching and learning	Not applicable	1, 2 &3
Creating a Positive School Climate - Protecting instructional time - Promoting professional development - Maintaining high visibility - Providing incentives for teachers - Providing incentives for learners	- Building relationships among stakeholders - Accountability for the teaching and learning process - Maintaining a conducive school environment - Teacher support strategies	Principals relied on their experiences as teachers to provide IL support to teachers	2 &3
	- Engendering collegiality and collaboration - District guidelines		2 & 4
No Challenges in PIMRS	**Challenges:** - Lack of teachers - Limited time - Limited knowledge and training - Scarcity of resources		4

Note. No participant responses to understanding, practices, and support to teachers related the dimension of defining the school mission.

Table 2 presents the overall alignment of the study linking the conceptual framework, the research questions and the study results. Despite the overall picture depicted of alignment, the table shows no responses related to the mission dimension despite the exploration of the principal's experiences with probes in three out of the four research questions. Lack of principal responses to indicate their awareness that defining the school mission is a dimension of IL may be an indication of one of two things; 1) that new principals do not consider defining the school mission and its functions to be an aspects of IL, 2) that the new principals have not engaged in defining the school mission for lack skill, hence no practices or experiences of framing and communicating school goals. Whether it is only a perception or lack of knowledge there is need to support the new principals to engage in the relevant practices for defining school mission.

Conclusions

Underlying the study was an attempt to address the gap in literature related to new primary school principals' understandings and practice of IL in an African context. The study has provided insight into the level of new principals' understandings and practice of IL at the beginning of the careers. The study concludes that new principals consider that it is important to; focus on students learning, account for teacher performance, monitor and implement of school plans, build relationships, account for teaching and learning in the classroom, engender collegiality and collaboration, establish teacher support strategies, and follow district guidelines. Acknowledging that great emphasis is being put on the accountability of the school principal for most functions of school leadership directed to ensure effective teaching and learning in schools. Available

literature highlights the impact of principal IL in different contexts including western developed education systems, education in China, Europe and Australia.

There has been limited research on this aspect in the African context therefore, this study contributes to the field of school leadership through the disclosure that the new principal participants in this study demonstrated limited understanding of IL. The lack of knowledge and understanding that it is the role of the principal to ensure a school mission that prioritizes the academic progress of students exists and is clearly communicated to all school stakeholders, depicts the mode of operation of the new principals as being reactive to the needs of students, teachers and parents with little or no effective strategic planning. In addition, it is important to view this gap as an entry point from which to identify strategies to equip newly appointed school principals with adequate knowledge and skills to be effective instructional leaders from the onset of their careers as school principals. Although the purpose of the study was to explore the understandings and practice of IL among new primary school principals, the identification of challenges faced in attempting to provide IL points out other aspects that need to be considered in supporting the new principals if they are to remain engaged on the quality of teaching and learning. These challenges may be some of the factors that need to be expounded to understand the extent of their impact on IL practice of new school principals.

Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of the study highlighted in chapter one were sustained. The impact limitation remains valid given the small number and specific population covered by the study that may impact transferability of the results. However, the thick

descriptions of the data might provide for comparison to similar contexts and participants with comparable demographics. Given the focus on a few new school principals as participants for this study, the absence of teacher perspectives in the study is a limitation.

A major challenge that arose during the data collection was the difficulty in accessing the participants at the initial time of the planned data collection as several locations within the study region experienced sporadic civil unrests. There was restriction of movement to the region which resulted into loss of time for data collection. As a result, four of the participants had to be interviewed away from their schools which would have been a familiar environment. It eliminated the possibility of observing the school environment that the participants described as challenging to their instructional practice. The other challenge not anticipated before the study was the level of English language proficiency of the school principals. All efforts to establish the level of English proficiency of the school principals indicated that, the principals in the region can ably communicate in English. However, during the interviews some participants were requesting to use both their mother tongue and English in responding to the interview questions. Having experience many principals declining to sign the consent form I decided to accept a mix of languages in the interview although I did not understand the local languages the participant used. However, I noted that each of the participants after expressing their ideas in mother tongue repeated themselves in English though not word for word. To manage this challenge, I solicited the services of two professional translators who did reverse translation of all the interview responses that were in local language. The limitation of time constraint equally manifested as there were longer

intervals to wait for the lifting of travel restrictions to allow access to research participants as a result a lot of time was lost.

The limitation on the possibility of self-awareness of participants causing exaggerated experiences did not occur as previously feared. All participants were able to confirm their information through member checking and acknowledging that the information was well transcribed, and the portions of mother tongue responses accurately translated. In addition, to avoid personal bias interfering with the data, the limitations of my subjectivity and assumptions were kept in check with journaling to keep abreast with my thoughts and not imposing them on both the participants during the interviews and the data during the manual transcription and analysis.

The findings of this study illustrate the level of understanding and practice of IL by newly appointed primary school principals. Having identified that there is a gap in understanding and knowledge about IL, the first recommendation relates to the need to plan and design programs that support building the knowledge base of newly appointed principals and putting in place a mentoring program to allow for capacity building. This understanding may support both the school leadership support system and the new school principals themselves to deliberately seek knowledge on the different dimensions of IL to improve their practice of school leadership in general.

Recommendations

This study illustrated how new principals understand and practice IL at the beginning of their careers in an African country context. First and foremost, this study has revealed a gap in understanding as well as practice of IL among new school principals in Ethiopia.

The lack of knowledge and practice in defining the school mission, formulating school goals and communicating these goals to others, signals a weak knowledge base for the new principals. Understanding leadership concepts is essential for effective practice of leadership. Therefore, it is recommended that specific efforts be put in place to design a structured portfolio of coherent learning opportunity for newly appointed principals that includes an IL learning package covering all dimensions. This should be part of the induction program for school principals that links instructional leadership to school improvement efforts. Moreover, Hallinger et al., (2017) asserts that the boundaries of IL knowledge base are essential for principals to know.

The second recommendation points to the necessity for targeted professional development and support systems for newly appointed school principals. In fact, Qian et al., (2017) underscore the importance of nurturing IL capacity of school leaders by putting in place professional development programs and support systems for school leaders. Furthermore, besides informing recruiters about critical skills and knowledge needs of new principals, the findings will also promote positive social change when used to develop and design educational leadership programs.

The third recommendation is specific to Ethiopia, that the regional and woreda (district) bureaus may consider crafting a coaching and mentoring program for newly appointed primary school principals. This would establish a formal peer coaching program to create a support system for new principals that will enable new appointees to start their careers with appropriate knowledge and understanding of not only IL but school leadership in general.

Along with the coaching and mentoring program, the fourth recommendation suggests that the Regional and Woreda (district) education bureaus should create and revise policies and protocols with concrete actions that encourage school principals to engage in instructional leadership functions. This will enable new school principals to evolve as effective instructional leaders. Finally, the challenge of lack of resources and supplies in schools should be critically considered to ensure the provision of additional resources to support school principals' efforts to improve instruction as a central component of instructional leadership.

Future Research

Reflecting on the methodological approach of the study, future studies should include observation of the actual practice of IL at school level. This would provide insight into the actual practices and would corroborate the reported experiences of the new principals. In addition, interviewing the teachers from each of the schools would provide further insight into the IL practices of the new principals from the perspective of the teachers. Therefore, it is important to undertake further research to include the perspectives of the teachers and students in a similar context to gain a full understanding of the new principal practices of IL in an African education system context.

Given the small sample size of the study and having been conducted in a specific location which stands as a limitation for generalizability of the results of this study; further research using a similar design but with a slightly larger sample of newly appointed principals is recommended, undertaking further research with the same design, methodology and sample is likely to increase confidence in the applicability of the

findings of this study. In addition, the findings on the challenges that new principals face in providing IL warrant a further systematic study especially focusing on the roles of the district and regional leaders in supporting school principals to deliver effective IL. Research that examines the contextual aspects that challenge the principal's ability to provide effective IL is needed.

Implications for Social Change.

Implications of the study results in relation to positive social change are relevant to school principals as practitioners at school level and regional and district education leaders as the support system for effective school leadership as well as training institutions that offer school leadership training. The findings point to gaps in understanding and practice, necessitating CPDs for new principals that would be a contribution to positive social change. Furthermore, the district bureaus may use the study findings to formulate standardized guidelines or protocols for practice of IL that provide an opportunity for principals to systematically identify and gradually engage in functions and behaviors that implement IL at school level. Choosing to develop standardized guidelines will ensure that both newly appointed and experienced principals will not overlook some of the important practices of IL such as defining, clarifying and communicating school missions or goals that has been highlighted in this study as a gap in both knowledge and practice of newly appointed primary school principals. The challenges new principals face may be some of the factors that need to be expounded through research to understand the extent of their impact on IL practice of school

principals. Ultimately, there is need to be cautious in generalizing the findings of this study to different contexts.

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Appendix A: IRB Approved Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Dear Sir/Madam

You are invited to participate in a research study on New Primary School Principals' Understanding and practice of IL in Lafto Woreda Ethiopia. The researcher is inviting new primary school principals who have been in leadership position for the last three years, appointed at the beginning of the academic year that started in September 2014 to participate in the study. This is a consent form that provides you with information about the study to be conducted by Dorothy Aanyu Angura who is a doctoral student at Walden University. This consent form is part of a process called "informed consent" that provides you with information to understand the study before deciding to participate in it.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to explore new principal's understandings and practices of IL and how to support teachers to be more effective instructors. The study will seek to identify what new principals understand their role to be and the challenges they encounter in practicing IL. The findings will contribute to the gap in research literature regarding the IL understandings and practices of new primary school principals.

Study Participant Requirements

Study participant must:

- Be a primary school principal (male or female)
- Have been appointed as school principal at the beginning of September 2015
- Have been school principal for at least three years.
- Ably communicate in English

About the Researcher Dorothy Aanyu Angura:

- Is an Education Specialist working with UNICEF in Ethiopia Country Office.
- Is a teacher and teacher trainer by training.
- Is not conducting this research for UNICEF or Ministry of Education but as a dissertation to be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Educational Policy, Leadership and Management.

Procedures: If you agree to this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an in-depth face-to face interview that will take between 45-90 minutes.
- Provide your contact information so an interview may be scheduled
- Make yourself available for the interview within 2 weeks of signing this consent form
- Participate in the face-to-face interview as scheduled
- Review a transcript of your interview response information within 2 weeks from conclusion of the interview to ensure data collected is accurately represented
- Provide feedback (if applicable) to researcher regarding any interview response discrepancies or confirm accuracy within 1 week of receiving interview summary

Here are some sample questions:

- How do you perceive the role of IL?
- What would you say are three or four most important things that instructional leaders should do?

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. If you decide to participate in the study now, you may still change your mind later. You may also withdraw from the study at any time if you wish.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: Being in this study may involve some risk of the minor discomforts that may be encountered in daily life of a principal on duty, such as fatigue or stress. Being in this study will not pose a risk to your safety or your well-being. The experiences you share in this study have the potential benefits to inform the education system and more specifically the increased understanding of IL needs of new school principals in the early years of the school leadership workforce. There will be no monetary benefits or gifts provided for participation.

Privacy: The reports of this study will not reveal the identities of individual participants. All details relating to location (schools) of the study will not be reveal. Your personal information will not be used for any purpose outside of this research project. The researcher will use unique codes for each participant information and electronic password protection to store all documents, data electronically. As required by the University, all the research raw data will be kept for a period of 5 years.

To maintain confidentiality, the researcher will do the following:

- All recorded interview data will be transcribed into written records and shared with each participant for review and confirming accuracy.
- All transcribed data will be stored electronically with password protection
- All interview raw data will only be available to myself as the researcher and research committee members and will only be used for the purpose of writing the research report.
- However, if I learn about current or ongoing child abuse or neglect, I will report this to the appropriate authorities.

This research study has duly gone through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) review process at Walden University and was approved on July 8th, 2019.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have at any time during the data collection process Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher through this mobile phone: (+251) 912653379 or via email at dorothy.aanyu-angura@waldenu.edu If you would like to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you may call the Research Participant Advocate? (1-800-925-3368 ext. 312-1210 from within the USA, 001-612-312-1210 from outside the USA, or email address irb@mail.waldenu.edu). Walden University's approval number for this study is 07-08-19-0661928 and it expires on July 7th, 2020.

Obtaining Your Consent; If you feel you understand the study well enough to decide, please sign two copies of this consent form and keep one for your records.

Sign below to indicate your Consent. "I consent." Signature: _____

Appendix B: Research Questions and Interview Probes

Research Question	Corresponding interview questions and probes Participant bio data
RQ1. What are new school principals' understandings of IL in Ethiopia?	Please describe your understanding of IL. What comes to mind for you when someone refers to you as the instructional leader of your school? What are the functions of an instructional leader? What do you consider important about IL?
RQ2. How do new principals' practice IL?	Describe the ways you have demonstrated IL in your school since you became a principal. What was easy for you to do? What was not so easy to do? Can you give some examples of how you provide IL in your school? What would you say are the four or five most important things that principals should do as instructional leaders?
RQ3. How do new principal's support teachers to be more effective instructors?	How do you support teachers to be more effective in their teaching? What activities do you engage with teachers for the purpose of improving instruction? How often do you do that? What have you personally done in the last three years to support teachers to be more effective How would you describe the results of your instructional support to teachers?
RQ4. What are the challenges new principals face in their role as an instructional leader?	What problems of practice get in the way of you being able to provide IL in your school? How has your experience as a teacher prepared you for the role of instructional leader in your school What type of activities/duties do you spend a majority of your day performing? What, if anything, prevents you from spending more time on activities relating directly to IL? What would you like to do differently to provide IL?

Appendix C: Sample Summary of Codes, Categories, and Themes

Codes	Categories	Themes
IL is about students Provide education for students Planning for students learning Mind students' needs for learning Students learning is most important Focus on students learning Support students learning Conduct tutorial classes for students Ensure students can compete academically-good results Change students' behavior, Managing students' behavior Counselling students	Strategic focus on planning for students learning IL is supporting students learning Managing and changing students' behavior Ensuring students achieve good results Providing guidance and counselling to students	Students learning as a focus of IL.
Monitor teacher attendance Give feedback to teachers on their performance Provide support to teachers- Help teachers in the classroom Planning with teachers Build consensus with teachers. Have a shared understanding with teachers Support teachers in planning Support teachers in facilitating learning Providing guidance to teachers Create and maintain friendly/good relationships with teachers Solve challenges faced by teachers in teaching Collaborate with teachers and students Provide continuous professional development for teachers	Ensuring teacher accountability Monitoring teacher performance and behavior Providing strategic teacher support and guidance in planning and delivering effective classroom instruction Maintaining good relationships with teachers and students Providing continuous professional development for teachers Allocating and managing teacher workload Managing teacher behavior and discipline Facilitating effective classroom instruction Managing teacher time on task Strategic monitoring of teacher schedules	Principal accountability on teacher performance

Managing teachers' work in the school
Plan for and with the teachers
Ensure teachers follow instructions
Sharing teaching experience with teachers
Respond to teacher questions about teaching and learning needs.
Resolving teacher problems
Managing different levels of teacher capacity.
Support teacher knowledge gaps on both subject content and teaching pedagogy
Support teachers on one-to-one basis
Administer punishment for teachers
Speak to teachers - counsel teachers on behavior and actions
Write warning letters
Summon teacher to answer to PTAS
Coordinate training by others for the teachers
Monitor teacher attendance.
Teacher time on task
Time management of teachers
IL is the role of the principal
Instructing others
Helping
Managing
Support
Guide

Oversee implementation of school action plans Make management plans and share plans Weekly teacher planning Monthly teacher planning Annual teacher planning Ensure department heads check lessons plans Strategic planning is important Planning Planning by self and with teachers Managing teacher schedules and time tables. Follow guidelines and checklists from the education offices Refer to instructions in manuals and checklist Active to monitor implementation of school plan Analyzing school strengths and weaknesses Liaise/coordinate with the education office	Strategic focus on planning Strategic implementation of school action plans Shared planning Following official guidelines and circulars Monitoring school plans Coordination with both internal and external stakeholders	Strategic monitoring, planning and implementation of action plans

Building consensus and ensuring a shared understanding with teachers Resolve conflicts. Resolving problems with school community Manage Solve different problems Solving problems in the school Resolve teacher problems Managing the community of the school Community engagement in learning of children Ensure satisfaction of the community Relationship with the community Consult with parents on school issues Maintain good relationship between teachers and parent and students Working under challenging school situations Manage school environment Ensure stability in the school	Consensus building Strategic focus on resolving conflict within school community Leading in problem solving Ensuring community engagement on school issues	Building good relationships among school stakeholders

Allocation of subjects and classes to teachers Monitor classroom instruction Engage in teaching and learning activities Discuss with teachers about improving students learning Providing teaching and learning materials to teachers Teaching process is central to IL. Manage the allocation of subjects and classes to teachers (right person at the right place Classroom management Taking responsibility for teaching and learning in the school Managing the teaching and learning of students Facilitating instruction Facilitation of teaching and learning process in the school Improve learning in the school Facilitate all school needs Ensure a favorable learning environment Approval of all teacher plans after checks by the departmental heads	Strategic use and management of time and school resources to facilitate learning Strategic focus on managing human and financial resources Strategic focus on the teaching process Manage the allocation of subjects and classes to teachers Accountability for teaching and learning in the school Strategic focus on monitoring classroom instruction Strategic focus on supporting the teaching and learning process Provide strategic leadership in the school IL is the role of the principal Facilitating instruction Instructing others Approval of all instructional plans	Accountability for the teaching and learning process

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