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Developing a validated instructional leadership profile of Turkish primary school principals



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1. Introduction

Contemporary research on school leadership has provided policymakers with increasingly persuasive evidence concerning the scope and means by which leadership contributes to student learning outcomes (Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Heck & Hallinger, 2015; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Robinson, 2006; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). This research increasingly points to instructional leadership as a critical role of principals who achieve promising results for school improvement (e.g., Leithwood et al., 2004, 2008; Robinson, 2006). Moreover, the impact of leadership appears to be most critical in schools that evidence the greatest need, schools that operate in challenging conditions (e.g., Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Day, 2009; Duke & Salmonowicz, 2010; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Leithwood, Harris et al., 2010; Murphy, 2008).

Within this body of research on the effects of school leadership on teaching and learning, the conceptualization of 'instructional leadership' developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) has become the most widely used model in empirical research (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2008; Robinson, 2006; Witziers, Bosker & Kruger, 2003). The research instrument associated with this conceptualization, the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale* (PIMRS; Hallinger, 1982, 1990), has been translated and used for research in more than 30 different countries (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Nonetheless, Hallinger and Wang (2015) recently observed that very few 'international scholars' had undertaken systematic validation of the PIMRS for use in education contexts that differ significantly in system structure and social culture from the site of its original validation in the USA. In short, the validity of the constructs and items comprising the PIMRS should not be

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taken for granted in school systems where the principal's role is conceptualized differently, or where socio-cultural norms impose different expectations for leader behavior in schools (Fromm, Volante, Hallinger, & Wang, In press).

With this admonition in mind, the current study sought to develop and validate a Turkish language version of the PIMRS Teacher Form for use in research, policy and leadership practice. The researchers began with translation, content validation, and adaptation procedures designed to develop a Turkish version of the PIMRS Teacher Form. The resulting PIMRS Turkish Form was administered to a representative sample of 294 randomly selected teachers working in 23 randomly selected primary schools in six Turkish provinces. Construct validation tests were conducted at both the scale (e.g., confirmatory factor analysis, reliability) and item levels (e.g., Rasch analysis). We then drew upon the dataset gathered with the PIMRS Turkish Form to develop a 'preliminary national profile' of the instructional leadership of Turkey's primary school principals. This Turkish profile was then compared to an instructional leadership profile of principals from several other countries.

The significance of this study lies in two domains. First, policymakers throughout the world have become increasingly interested in developing reliable means of assessing the instructional leadership of school principals for related purposes of training and needs assessment, performance appraisal, and policy implementation evaluation (Hallinger and Wang, 2015). The current study demonstrates how a research tool designed in one country can be adapted and validated for use in another national context. Second, the study showed how research-based evidence on principal leadership could be compiled for local use as well as cross-national comparison. These dual contributions offer insights into ways that research tools can be adapted and validated for use in both basic and policy-oriented research in an increasingly diverse global education context.¹

2. Theoretical perspective

In this section of the paper, we begin by presenting the conceptual framework developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) that guided the present investigation. Then we discuss the properties of the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale* (Hallinger, 1982,1990; Hallinger and Wang, 2015), the research tool used in this study.

2.1. Conceptual framework of instructional leadership

Traditionally scholars have conceptualized the school principalship in terms of three key roles: managerial, political, and instructional (e.g., Cuban, 1988). In the USA, as well as other countries, managerial behavior was generally viewed as predominant among these roles. Scholarship in educational leadership has, however, undergone a paradigm shift since 1980 when findings from research on 'effective schools' suggested that the instructional leadership role of the principal should be given greater emphasis (e.g., Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Erickson, 1979; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This finding, though greeted with skepticism from some quarters (e.g., Cuban, 1988; Firestone & Herriot, 1982), subsequently stimulated the development of new leadership models aimed explicitly at improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools (e.g., Blasé, 1987; Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Leithwood et al., 2008; Marks and Printy, 2003; Robinson, 2006).

According to Leithwood et al. (2008), the most widely disseminated model of instructional leadership was developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). This conceptual framework proposed three dimensions of the principal's instructional leadership role. These included leadership practices aimed directly at improving teaching and learning processes (i.e., *Manages the Instructional Program*), as well as practices aimed at shaping the direction (i.e., *Defines the School's Mission*) and the climate (*Develops a Positive School Learning Climate*) of the school (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985). The model has remained relevant 30 years hence, as an evolving body of research on leadership for learning increasingly affirms effects of instructional leadership on student outcomes (e.g., Day, 2009; Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Heck & Hallinger, 2010, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood, Patten et al., 2010; Neumerski, 2013; Sebastian and Allensworth, 2012; Rigby, 2014; Robinson, 2006).

More specifically, this conceptual framework has been influential in guiding education policy and practice concerned with principal preparation, selection, and evaluation (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2008; Murphy, 2007). This model has also shaped the field's thinking about how leadership influences learning (Leithwood et al., 2008; Robinson, 2006) and the development of research tools used for studying and evaluating school leadership (e.g., Goldring et al., 2009; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Leithwood, Patten et al., 2010; Porter et al., 2010). Next, we examine the characteristics of the research instrument employed in this study, the PIMRS.

2.2. Principal instructional management rating scale

Drawing explicitly upon this conceptual model, Hallinger (1982), (1990) developed the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale* (PIMRS). The instrument follows the conceptual model outlined in Fig. 1 by incorporating three dimensions and 10 functions in a survey research instrument. These constructs are measured by 50 items, organized such that each function-level subscale is composed of five items (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The 50 PIMRS items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). The PIMRS has four forms, including a

¹ Hallinger and Lee, 2013 for example of how a national profile was developed in Thailand.

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