
Teachers' Perceptions on Principals' Instructional Leadership Behaviors in Vietnam

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Abstract

While there are a lot of studies on principal instructional leadership from other countries, there is far less known about Vietnamese principalship. This article employs a sample of 569 public elementary school teachers in Ho Chi Minh City perceived instructional leadership of elementary school principals. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data. From the perceptions of elementary school teachers, principals were perceived as active instructional leaders. There are significant differences between teacher groups in rating principal instructional leadership based on teacher gender, teaching experience, and years working together with the current principal. The article suggests further studies need to be carried out.

Keywords:

Instructional leadership behaviors, Teachers' perceptions, Elementary school, Vietnam

Authors' Notes

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Introduction

The principal's role has become an interested topic of research in educational leadership field (Lineburg, 2010). There were ninety four percent of studies on educational leadership topic from 1967 to 1980 focused on public school administrators (Bridges, 1982). The role of principal was the focus of numerous studies because it has been identified as a key aspect of an effective school (Cotton, 2003; Goodwin, Cunningham, & Childress, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

Regarding playing an important role in effective schools, principals are often considered essential to the success of schools, and have a discernible effect on a school's level of productivity (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), as well as playing a critical role in effective instructional interventions (New York City Department of Education, n.d.). Principals exert this influence primarily as instructional managers or leaders (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) even though they have many roles to serve in schools' business. They are thus motivated to become more active as instructional leaders and must have strong instructional skills

and extensive knowledge of teaching and learning (Lineburg, 2010).

In Vietnam, elementary education is the foundation for formation, development of the comprehensive human personality, and quality of elementary education is the basis for ensuring educational quality at all levels. This has put pressure on elementary school principals to enhance teaching and learning and create powerful learning environments for their students as well as to ensure students' achievement every school year. How elementary school principals demonstrate their instructional leadership behaviors in the context of Vietnam's education. This article investigates elementary school principals' instructional leadership behaviors as perceived by teachers. Two research questions will be answered in the article:

1. How do elementary school teachers perceive their principals' instructional leadership behaviors?
2. Are there significant differences in teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional leadership behaviors in terms of teacher demographic variables?

Overview of Instructional Leadership

Behaviors Literature

According to Sheppard (1996), there are two perspectives of instructional leadership: one is "narrow" while the other is "broad". Instructional leadership in the narrow view reflects those actions that directly affect teaching and learning, such as curriculum supervision, teacher instruction, learning appraisal. In the broad view, principal instructional leadership is defined as all activities that have an impact on student learning (Donmoyer & Wagstaff, 1990; Murphy, 1998).

As for the narrow view of instructional leadership, the essential role of principals as instructional leaders emphasizes the behaviors that promote teaching and learning. Many researchers define instructional leadership as a series of principals' behaviors that influence classroom instruction and instruction programs in their schools to promote student achievement (Babb, 2012; Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, 1994; Whitaker, 1998). As a result, it

requires principals to spend a great deal of time, show a lot of concern in classrooms and regularly provide suggestions to improve learning and teaching.

This study uses a comprehensive model of instructional leadership behaviors composed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). This model consists of three dimensions for the instructional leadership role of the principal: Defining the school mission; managing the instructional program; and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). These three dimensions are delineated into the ten instructional leadership functions: Frame the school goals; communicate the school goals; supervise and evaluate instruction; coordinate the curriculum; monitor student progress; protect instructional time; maintain high visibility; provide incentives for teachers; promote professional development; and provide incentives for learning (Hallinger, 1982).

The dimension of defining the school mission includes framing school goals and communicating school goals. It refers to the principal's role in determining the central goals of the school and working with staff to ensure that the school has clear, measurable, time-based goals which focus on the academic progress of students. It is also concerned with the ways in which the principal communicates the school's important goals to the school community. The principal can use formal or informal communication, such as handbooks, staff meetings, school assemblies, conversations with staff or students, bulletin boards, and teacher and parent conferences.

The dimension of managing the instructional program involves the coordination and control of instruction and curriculum. The functions of this dimension include three leadership activities: supervising and evaluating instruction; coordinating the curriculum; and monitoring student progress. This function requires the principal to be deeply engage in stimulating, supervising, and monitoring teaching and learning in the school. Furthermore, the principal must have expertise in teaching and learning, as well as a commitment to the school's improvement.

The third dimension, developing the school learning climate encompasses principal behaviors that protect instructional time; promote professional development; maintain high visibility; provide incentives for teachers; and provide incentives for learning. This dimension is broader in scope and

purpose than the other two. These functions include mostly indirect behaviors that create high standards and expectations for students and teachers (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Methodology

This study was conducted in Ho Chi Minh City, the largest metropolitan area in Vietnam in terms of economy, culture, education, and population. The target population for this study was public elementary school teachers who had worked with the principal at the current school at least one academic year. Working with current principals for one year creates chance for teachers have enough information to understand the principal's instructional leadership behaviors.

The study employed a survey for generalizing from a sample of teachers' perceptions. In order to collect demographic information, questions on the following were added to the teacher survey: gender, years of teaching experience and years working with the current principal. The demographic information was collected to determine characteristics of the respondents. These demographic variables served as independent variables of the study.

By employing stratified sampling, the study selected 600 teachers from 120 elementary schools in HCMC. Of the 600 questionnaires distributed,

569 questionnaires were returned for a 94.8 percent response rate.

SPSS 16.0 software was used for analyzing data to obtain descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics measure both the central tendency and the dispersion of the data, including means and standard deviations. The mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for each of the ten job functions were obtained to determine teachers' overall perceptions of principal instructional leadership behaviors. Finally, teacher perceptions were also analyzed based on gender, years of teaching experience, and years of working with their current principals. In generating an overall picture of participants in the study, frequency and percentage were utilized to describe demographic profile of the sample.

For the second research question, the independent variables for ANOVA analysis included years of teaching experience, and years of working together with current principal.

Results and Discussion

Teachers' Demographic Profile

Demographic information collected for teachers included three variables: gender, teaching experience, and years working with the current principal. Table 1

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Teachers Participating in This Study (N=569)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	102
	Female	467
Teaching Experience	1 year	3
	2-4 years	34
	5-9 years	126
	10-15 years	228
	16 years or more	178
Years Working with the Current Principal	1 year	90
	2-4 years	224
	5-9 years	160
	10-15 years	77
	16 years or more	18

presents a demographic profile of teacher sample used in this study.

As Table 1 shows, 82.1% of teachers were female, male teachers composed only 17.9% of the sample. Table 1 also shows 40.1% of the teacher sample had 10-15 years of teaching experience; over 30% of those respondents had more than 16 years of teaching experience while only 22.1% of teachers had 5-9 years of teaching experience. Only 7% had 1-4 years of teaching experience. According to respondents received, about 39.4% had 2-4 years working with the current principals, 28.1% had 5-9 years, 15.8% had 1 year, and 13.5% of teachers had 10-15 years. Only 3.2% of teachers had 16 and more years working with the current principals.

Elementary School Teachers Perception on Principals' Instructional Leadership

Respondents were asked to answer the questionnaire using a Likert scale: with 1 as "almost never", 2 as "seldom", 3 as "sometimes", 4 as "frequently" to 5 as "almost always". Descriptive statistics were used to describe teachers' response on each job function of the PIMRS. Table 2 shows the overall statistics of the survey responses for the ten job functions described by the PIMRS. For the purpose of providing further descriptive data, each of the 48 items in teacher survey (see appendix A) is described by mean and standard deviation.

Table 2 shows that (1) framing the school goals had the highest mean (4.41). These were followed by (4) coordinating the curriculum (4.36), (2) communicating the school goals (4.22), (8) providing incentives for teachers (4.19), (9) promoting professional development (4.16), (10) providing incentives for learning (4.10), (3) supervising and evaluating instruction (4.05), (5) monitoring student progress (4.00), (7) maintaining high visibility (3.64), and (6) protecting instructional time (3.50).

The teachers gave relatively high scores in rating their principal's instructional leadership behaviors across the 10 job functions compared with the results of other studies. The means of ten job functions fall between 3.50 and 4.41. In the study on secondary school principals' instructional leadership in Thailand, Hallinger et al. (1994) found that the scores of teachers' ratings fell between 3.42 and 2.45. Similarly, the study of Saavedra (1987) on instructional leadership behaviors of secondary school principal in Malaysia also showed that teachers' scores for their principal instructional leadership were not high. Their rating scores were between 3.13 and 3.58.

The second finding of this research question is that the pattern of teachers' ratings of their principal instructional leadership in this study is relatively consistent with the pattern of studies in Malaysia conducted by Saavedra (1987) and in Thailand conducted by Hallinger et al. (1994). The three highest rated job functions among Vietnamese principals rated by their teachers are: (1) framing the school goals, (4)

Table 2. Teachers' Perceptions of Principal Instructional Leadership Behaviors

Job Functions	Rank	Mean	(SD)
(1) Frame the School Goals	1	4.41	(.46)
(2) Communicate the School Goals	3	4.22	(.53)
(3) Supervise and Evaluate Instruction	7	4.05	(.49)
(4) Coordinate the Curriculum	2	4.36	(.91)
(5) Monitor Student Progress	8	4.00	(.62)
(6) Protect Instructional Time	10	3.50	(.92)
(7) Maintain High Visibility	9	3.64	(.63)
(8) Provide Incentives for Teachers	4	4.19	(.59)
(9) Promote Professional Development	5	4.16	(.49)
(10) Provide Incentives for Learning	6	4.10	(.62)

coordinating the curriculum, and (2) communicating the school goal. In addition, three lowest rated job functions include (6) protecting instructional time, (7) maintaining high visibility, and (5) monitoring student progress. Saavedra's (1987) findings showed the following patterns of Malaysian principals with three highest rated job functions: (10) providing incentives for learning, (2) communicating the school goals and (1) framing the school goals. The three lowest rated job functions included (7) maintaining high visibility, (8) providing incentives for teachers, and (5) monitoring student progress. In addition, the study of Hallinger et al. (1994) demonstrated Thai principals' instructional leadership pattern with three highest scores on job functions (10) providing incentives for learning, (6) protecting instructional time, and (1) framing the school goals. The three lowest rated job functions were (7) maintaining high visibility, (3) supervising and evaluating instruction, and (5) monitoring student progress. The same two highest rated job functions in Vietnam study and Malaysia study are (1) framing the school goals and (2) communicating the school goals. Vietnam study and Thailand study just share only one highest rated job function, which is (1) framing the school goal. The same two lowest rated job functions in three countries are (7) maintaining high visibility and (5) monitoring student progress.

The 10 job functions in this study fall from moderate to high level of teachers' ratings suggest that elementary school principals are active instructional leaders assessed by the PIMRS when compared with scores obtained in the mentioned studies.

Perceptions of Instructional Leadership Behaviors Based on Demographic Variables.

In this section, we will discuss on the findings of teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership behaviors for each job function based on demographic variables.

Descriptive statistic on teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership behaviors based on the teacher demographics will be shown in Table 3. Table 3 shows that female teachers rated their principals' instructional leadership higher than male teachers in the following job functions: (1) framing the school goals, (2) communicating the school goals, (3) supervising and evaluating instruction, (4) coordinating

the curriculum, (5) monitoring student progress, (8) providing incentives for teachers, and (9) promoting professional development. Male teachers rated their principals' instructional leadership higher in the following job functions: (6) protecting instructional time, (7) maintaining high visibility and (10) providing incentives for learning.

For the variable of teachers' teaching experience, teachers with one year of teaching experience and teachers with 16 or more years of teaching experience rated their principals lowest in instructional leadership. Teachers with 2-4 years of teaching experience rated their principals highest in (10) providing incentives for learning. Teachers with 5-9 years of teaching experience rated their principals highest scores in eight of the ten job functions, including: (1) framing the school goals, (2) communicating the school goals, (3) supervising and evaluating instruction, (5) monitoring student progress, (6) protecting instructional time, (7) maintaining high visibility, (8) providing incentives for teachers, and (9) promoting professional development. Teachers with 10-15 years of teaching experience rated their principals highest score in (4) coordinating the curriculum.

For the variable of years working with the current principal, teachers who had one year with their current principal gave the lowest scores for instructional leadership. Teacher who had 2-4 years with their current principal gave the highest scores in (5) monitoring student progress, and (7) maintaining high visibility. Teachers who had 5-9 years with their current principal gave the highest score in (3) supervising and evaluating instruction. Teachers who had 10-15 years with their current principal gave the highest score in (4) coordinating the curriculum. Lastly, teacher who had 16 years or more with their current principal gave the highest scores on six out of ten job functions, included: (1) framing the school goals, (2) communicating the school goals, (6) protecting instructional time, (8) providing incentives for teachers, (9) promoting professional development, and (10) providing incentives for learning. This study used independent samples t-tests and ANOVA to determine if there are significant differences in teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional leadership behaviors in terms of teacher demographic variables. Firstly, independent samples t-tests with an alpha of .05 were used to determine whether there were any differences in ratings of principals' instructional leadership behaviors between male and female

Table 3. Teachers' Perceptions of Principal Instructional Leadership Behaviors for Each Job Function Based on Demographic Variables (N=569)

Job Functions		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
		(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)
Gender	Male	4.30	4.08	3.94	4.10	3.93	3.55	3.66	4.12	4.17	4.29
		(.56)	(.59)	(.41)	(.58)	(.73)	(.89)	(.61)	(.57)	(.50)	(.43)
	Female	4.43	4.25	4.08	4.41	4.02	3.49	3.63	4.21	4.21	4.06
		(.43)	(.51)	(.51)	(.96)	(.59)	(.92)	(.63)	(.59)	(.49)	(.64)
Teaching Experience	1 year	3.60	3.40	3.80	4.00	3.07	2.53	3.07	3.60	3.40	3.73
		(1.2)	(1.44)	(.40)	(.33)	(1.33)	(.99)	(1.27)	(1.39)	(.72)	(.42)
	2-4 years	4.32	4.05	4.07	4.31	3.89	3.44	3.60	4.01	4.19	4.28
		(.74)	(.79)	(.42)	(.60)	(.82)	(.82)	(.87)	(.76)	(.61)	(.51)
	5-9 years	4.45	4.32	4.19	4.33	4.12	3.65	3.78	4.32	4.26	4.16
		(.45)	(.56)	(.55)	(.45)	(.70)	(.89)	(.72)	(.53)	(.48)	(.50)
	10-15 years	4.42	4.19	3.98	4.45	3.99	3.36	3.58	4.16	4.15	4.03
		(.42)	(.50)	(.51)	(1.29)	(.58)	(.96)	(.56)	(.62)	(.51)	(.64)
Years Working with the Current Principal	≥16 years	4.39	4.25	4.05	4.26	3.97	3.61	3.63	4.19	4.10	4.12
		(.44)	(.44)	(.42)	(.54)	(.52)	(.86)	(.56)	(.50)	(.42)	(.68)
	1 year	4.32	4.03	4.04	4.29	4.01	3.61	3.64	4.08	4.08	4.18
		(.59)	(.62)	(.45)	(.46)	(.69)	(.91)	(.65)	(.59)	(.47)	(.45)
	2-4 years	4.41	4.22	4.07	4.24	4.10	3.59	3.70	4.24	4.19	4.23
		(.46)	(.54)	(.53)	(.53)	(.65)	(.91)	(.66)	(.58)	(.50)	(.44)
	5-9 years	4.45	4.31	4.11	4.40	3.98	3.40	3.68	4.25	4.20	4.06
		(.42)	(.50)	(.49)	(.50)	(.58)	(.91)	(.59)	(.52)	(.47)	(.73)
10-15 years	4.31	4.21	3.88	4.62	3.76	3.20	3.36	3.40	4.02	3.65	
	(.36)	(4.45)	(.46)	(2.12)	(.50)	(.93)	(.57)	(.68)	(.51)	(.79)	
≥16 years	4.83	4.52	4.09	4.61	3.89	4.06	3.69	4.43	4.21	4.38	
	(.18)	(.29)	(.24)	(.17)	(.40)	(.44)	(.32)	(.47)	(.42)	(.39)	

teachers. Teacher gender was independent variable and ten job functions were dependent variables in the test. This test allows us to compare the difference between female and male teachers' ratings. Table 4 reports the result of independent samples t-tests.

Table 4 shows that there were statistically significant differences between male and female teachers' ratings of their principals in five job functions: (1) framing the school goals, (2) communicating the school goals, (3) supervising and evaluating

instruction, (4) coordinating the curriculum, and (10) providing incentives for learning.

There were no statistically significant differences between male and female teachers' ratings of their principals in the remaining five job functions: (5) monitoring student progress, (6) protecting instructional time, (7) maintaining high visibility, (8) providing incentives for teachers, and (9) promoting professional development.

Table 4. Results of the Independent Samples T-Test of Differences of Male Teachers' and Female Teachers' Ratings of Principal Instructional Leadership Behaviors

Job Functions	Male		Female		Mean Difference	t	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
(1) Frame the School Goals	4.30	.56	4.43	.43	-.13	-2.18	.031*
(2) Communicate the School Goals	4.08	.59	4.25	.51	-.17	-.27	.009**
(3) Supervise and Evaluate Instruction	3.94	.41	4.08	.51	-.14	-2.94	.004**
(4) Coordinate the Curriculum	4.10	.58	4.41	.96	-.31	-3.16	.002**
(5) Monitor Student Progress	3.93	.73	4.02	.59	-.09	-1.09	.276
(6) Protect Instructional Time	3.55	.89	3.49	.92	.05	.53	.598
(7) Maintain High Visibility	3.66	.61	3.63	.63	.03	.43	.669
(8) Provide Incentives for Teachers	4.12	.57	4.21	.59	-.09	-1.36	.173
(9) Promote Professional Development	4.17	.50	4.15	.49	.01	.26	.798
(10) Provide Incentives for Learning	4.29	.43	4.06	.64	.23	3.45	.001**

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, two-tailed; N=569

Among five job functions showing significant differences between female and male teachers there are four functions in which female teachers give significant higher scores than male teachers do. These job functions include (1) framing the school goal, (2) communicating the school goals, (3) supervising and evaluating instruction, and (4) coordinating the curriculum. There are at least three possible explanations for this difference. First, it is necessary to note that more than 80 percent of the teachers in this study were female. This may be one reason that in Vietnamese culture, female teachers perceive their principals to be more active in instructional leadership than male teachers do. Principals may also find it easier to communicate, to understand, and pay attention to female teachers than male teachers. Through the conversations they understand each other and this kind of informal communication impact on female teachers' appreciation their principals' instructional leadership.

Second, compared with men, women tend to overestimate their leaders' ability and performance. Men's evaluations on their principal instructional leadership may be stricter, resulting in lower scores for principals. Third, Vietnamese elementary school principals may give more support and attention to their female teachers who influence on school quality. Since,

in Vietnam, female teachers in elementary schools are assigned to be classroom teachers while male teachers are responsible for other tasks as physical education and extra-curricular activity

It is surprising that male teachers rate their principals significantly higher than female teachers do for function (10) providing incentives for learning. It is difficult to find an explanation for this. Typically, teachers are responsible for motivating and inspiring students in terms of learning. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) found that in elementary schools, the scores for this function were lower than for other instructional leadership functions. This point needs to be examined more closely in a further study.

To determine whether there were any differences in ratings of principals between teachers who worked shorter or longer periods with the principal, a one-way ANOVA was used. Another reason is that groups was conducted to compare mean scores for instructional leadership behaviors of teachers who worked with their principals for (1) 1 year, (2) 2-4 years, (3) 5-9 years, (4) 10-15 years, (5) 16 or more years.

Table 5. ANOVA Results of Instructional Leadership Job Functions among Five Groups of Years Working Together with the Current Principal

Job Functions	F	Sig.	Post Hoc Comparisons
(1) Frame the School Goals	5.87	.000***	(1), (2), (3), (4) < (5)
(2) Communicate the School Goals	5.57	.000***	(1) < (2), (3), (5)
(3) Supervise and Evaluate Instruction	3.05	.017*	(2), (3) > (4)
(4) Coordinate the Curriculum	3.06	.016*	(1), (2), (3) < (5); (2) < (3)
(5) Monitor Student Progress	4.61	.001**	(1) > (4)
(6) Protect Instructional Time	5.14	.000***	(1), (2), (3), (4) < (5); (1), (2) > (4)
(7) Maintain High Visibility	4.69	.001**	(1), (2), (3) > (4)
(8) Provide Incentives for Teachers	4.78	.001**	(2), (3), (5) > (4)
(9) Promote Professional Development	2.88	.022*	(1) > (4)
(10) Provide Incentives for Learning	15.42	.000***	(1), (2), (3), (5) > (4)

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, two-tailed; $N = 569$

On the basis of these results, it is interesting to note that except the group with 10-15 years of working with the current principal, the more years working with the principals, the higher ratings on their principals' instructional leadership behaviors they give. Specially, teachers with at least 16 years of working with the current principal give significantly higher ratings for six of the ten job functions than the other groups do. These job functions include (1) framing the school goals, (2) communicating the school goals, (4) coordinating the curriculum, (6) protecting instructional time, (8) providing incentives for teachers, and (10) providing incentives for learning. One possible explanation for why teachers who have worked with their leaders for longer periods generally give higher ratings is that they have known their principals long enough to fully understanding them. Another reason which could be taken into account is that these principals with more years of principalship experiences actively demonstrated their instructional leadership behaviors. Experienced principals can find effective and confident approaches to define the school mission, manage instructional programs, and develop instructional climate.

One characteristic of Vietnamese culture is that the longer time people are together, the more like family members they become. Thus principals and

teachers who work together long enough will feel free to interact informally and formally in order to improve teaching and learning. This creates more opportunities for principals to talk with teachers and get suggestions, feedback and supporting collaboration or give praise for effective teaching as well as provide professional development.

Ratings for seven job function are lower for teachers who had worked 10-15 years with their principals. The three functions that were not rated lower are (1) framing the school goals, (2) communicating the school goals, and (4) coordinating the curriculum. It is difficult to explain why teachers who worked such a long time under their principals give significantly lower ratings. Further research is needs to investigate these statistically significant discrepancies.

To determine whether there were any differences in ratings of principals between teachers who had shorter or longer ranges of teaching, a one-way ANOVA between groups was conducted to compare mean scores for instructional leadership behaviors of teachers who had teaching experience of (1) 1 year, (2) 2-4 years, (3) 5-9 years, (4) 10-15 years, (5) 16 or more years.

Table 6. ANOVA Results of Instructional Leadership Job Functions among Five Groups of Years of Teaching Experience

Job Functions	F	Sig.	Post Hoc Comparisons
(1) Frame the School Goals	3.06	.016*	(1) < (3), (4), (5)
(2) Communicate the School Goals	4.27	.002**	(1) < (3), (5)
(3) Supervise and Evaluate Instruction	4.22	.002**	(1) > (4)
(4) Coordinate the Curriculum	1.28	.277	-
(5) Monitor Student Progress	3.33	.010*	(1) < (3)
(6) Protect Instructional Time	3.80	.005**	(3), (5) > (4)
(7) Maintain High Visibility	2.87	.023*	(3) > (4)
(8) Provide Incentives for Teachers	3.31	.011*	(2) < (3)
(9) Promote Professional Development	3.95	.004**	(1), (5) < (3)
(10) Provide Incentives for Learning	2.06	.084	-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, two-tailed; $N = 569$.

The numbers given above denote following years of teaching experience (1)=1 year, (2)=2-4 years, (3)=5-9 years, (4)=10-15 years, (5)=16 or more years.

Examining how the variable of years of teaching experience influence teachers' perceptions of their principals' instructional leadership behaviors shows somewhat same finding with above variable years of working with the current principal. With the exception of the group with 10-15 years of teaching experience, it seems that the more experience in teaching they have, the higher ratings teachers give on their principal instructional leadership behaviors.

It is also clear that teachers with 5-9 years of teaching experience gave consistently higher ratings for all eight job functions than teachers with more or less experience. One possible explanation for this is that teachers in this group are usually in the age range of 26-31. At this career stage, they have matured in teaching but they are also young enough to be full of energy and enthusiasm to contribute to teaching. With this enthusiastic perspective, they are enthusiastic in rating their principals' instructional leadership as well.

Similarly, teachers with one year of teaching experience gave significantly lower ratings for four out of eight job functions. Compared to other teachers, one-year teachers seem to underestimate principals ability to (1) framing the school goals, (2) communicating

the school goals, (4) monitoring student progress, and (9) promoting professional development. One explanation for this discrepancy may be that in their first year of teaching, novice teachers are sometimes overwhelmed by their teaching tasks and need more time to adapt themselves to their new circumstances. That may be why they do not perceive principal instructional leadership. Another possible explanation is that principals usually ask experienced teachers to be responsible for providing support and help to novice teachers. This may limit the instructional leadership role of principals to novice teachers.

As for function (6) protecting instructional time, teachers with at least 16 years of teaching experience give significantly higher rating than teachers with 10-15 years of teaching experience do. One possible explanation for this difference is that the more experienced teachers are, the higher ratings they give their principals for protecting instructional time. With many experiences in teaching, senior teachers tend to control and manage their students well and as a result, they have earned their principals' trust. Therefore, their instruction time has not been interrupted by other activities from school principals.

As explained above, function (10) providing incentives for learning requires classroom teachers to inspire and motivate their students. Principals must ask teachers to inspire students without external incentives.

Conclusions

This study provides data-based findings drawn from the local context that could support educational authorities and elementary school principals making decisions regarding instructional leadership. The reasons for this statement could be found in the below implications. Results of the study could be listed as follows:

First, teachers give high scores on eight out of ten instruction leadership functions, excepting Protect instructional time and Maintain high visibility. It reveals that elementary school principals in Vietnam demonstrate actively with the role of instructional leaders.

Second, female teachers rate their principals' instructional leadership higher than male teachers.

Third, there are significant differences in ratings between teacher groups based on teacher gender, teaching experience, and years working together with the current principal.

There are two implications should be drawn from the results of the study. The first is Vietnamese elementary school principals should set up more time for their instructional leadership role, especially pay attention on protecting instructional time and maintaining high visibility. The second is the school district keeps a principal in one school as long as possible in order to enhancing their instructional leadership effectiveness.

Although this article mentions principal instructional leadership as perceived by teachers, it provides some evidences about the current situation of instructional leadership in Vietnam. For clear picture of principal instructional leadership in Vietnam, further studies need to be done.

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