

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS' MISSION DEFINITION

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Abstract

The role of school leaders is not only to manage the school but also functions as instructional leaders. The effectiveness of the school depends on the school leader's instructional leadership. This study focuses on the first dimension of the instructional leadership conceptual framework. Defining a school mission is the first dimension of the framework that identify how the school leaders practicing instructional leadership to defines the school's goals. There are two constructs in this dimension. The first construct is framing the school's goals and second construct is communicating the school's goal. This study focuses on these two constructs but specifically on school's academic goals. School leaders in this study refer to principals, assistant principals, heads of department, and heads of subject. Therefore, the aims of this study are to find out on how the school leaders frame and communicate the schools' academic goals. This study was conducted on 114 teachers from private schools in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Gombak and Cheras were the two districts selected in Kuala Lumpur and Subang was the only district selected in Selangor. The instrument for this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was adopted and adapted from the instrument developed by Hallinger in 1982, and it was modified in 1990. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 20.0. Percentages, means, standard deviation and independent samples t-test were produced from the data. The results are used to investigate the significant difference of private school leaders in practicing instructional leadership to define the school's academic goals. At the end of the study it shows that the private school leaders from Kuala Lumpur and Selangor are practicing the instructional leadership to define the school's academic goals.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership; Academic Goals; Private School.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this 21st century era, instructional leadership is still an applicable and apt practice, even with competition from transformational leadership and distributed leadership (Hallinger, 2005). Ministry of Education stressed the role of school leaders as instructional leaders in handling changes in schools and guiding students towards achieving Vision 2020 (Jamelaa & Jainabee, 2011). Based on previous researches, instructional leadership can elevate students' performance by as much as 20% (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 - 2025, 2012). Educational leaders are responsible for how well students are doing and the

extent to which achievement is improving (Leithwood & Fullan, 2012). In the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025 (2012), all the school leaders will receive a greater support to help them become more liable to deliver higher student outcomes and properly manage instructional leadership matters such as school improvement planning and curriculum and co-curricular planning. This is to ensure that the school leaders are ready to practice the instructional leadership in managing the school.

In order to provide the strategic focus for the school, school leaders use mission and vision statements as the tools (King, 2001; Meacham & Gaff, 2006; Senge, et al., 2000). This is because the mission and vision statements play an important role in the process of delivering a sense of purpose to an organization and the strategic directions that it may take (Calder, 2002; Hendrie, 1996; Weiss & Piderit, 1999). Mission and vision of the school play an important role to set the strategic direction of the school. Not only that, private school mission and vision is the key factors to attract parents and student enrollment in the school. Therefore, this research attempts to find out how school leaders frame their school's goals and communicate the school's goals.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is significant to produce effective teaching and learning. Through instructional leadership, the excellence in academic performance can be produced among teachers and students (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). The term “instructional leadership” was introduced during the effective school movement to standardize the role of principal, the effective teaching practice, coordinate the school's curriculum, and monitor the classroom instruction and student progress (Barth, 1986). The definition of instructional leadership emphasises on the leadership related to teaching and learning process (Murphy, 1988). Aside from that, instructional leadership can be defined as strategic implementation of knowledge to resolve specific problem content and to attain the aim of schooling through others (Krug, 1992).

In general, the instructional leadership functions is instrumental towards promoting student learning and managerial behaviors (Murphy, 1988; Donmoyer & Wagstaff, 1990). The effective instructional leader is the primary source that provides instructional source, as a communicator and its presence can always be seen at school (Andrews & Soder, 1987). Therefore, teachers who have instructional leadership will affect student engagement in the learning process (Aziz & Baba, 2011). The difference between instructional leadership and transformational leadership is the use of approach when setting the vision for the school. Transformational leadership uses the bottom-up approach, meanwhile, instructional leadership top-down approach (Hallinger, 2003). This means that the transformational leader will generate a shared vision with the staff members, while instructional leadership created the set of goals for the staff to follow and reward them if they achieved the goals.

2.2 The Role of Principal's Instructional Leadership

Majority of the educational personage proposed that educational leaders need to understand the concept of instructional leadership and practice it when carrying out duties and responsibilities in school (Hallinger, 2005). Effective instructional leaders play an important role in creating and encouraging instructional development in school (De Bevoise, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990). Reeves (2006) stated that the principal role as instructional leadership is described as “leader of learning”. This means that the principals can influence the type of instruction that the teachers adapt and adopt in their classroom as instructional leader (Blase & Blase, 1998; Blase & Roberts, 1994; King, 1991).

Even though most of the previous study indicated the principal as the instructional leader of the school, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) commented the instructional leadership is referring to everything including the administrator if he/she had direction in determining to do so. Instructional leadership has also been described as a sequence of behaviours that was intended to affect classroom instruction (Leithwood, 1994). All leaders in school including principal, assistant principals, department heads and subject heads must apply instructional leadership for school improvement planning, and curriculum and co-curricular planning (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 - 2025, 2012). Therefore, in this study instructional leader is not only focusing on the role of the principal but also to all school leaders.

The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) is one of the Instructional Leadership Model that shows the conceptual framework of the principals' instructional leadership role (see Figure 1). In this framework, there are three dimensions referring to the role of principal's instructional leadership. The first dimension indicates the role of instructional leader in working with the staff to ensure that the school has a distinct mission to focus and the mission is specifically on the academic progress of its students (Hallinger & Lee, 2013). The purpose of this dimension is to indicate the responsibility of instructional leader or principal to make sure the existence of the mission, communicate widely to the employees, and make sure that there is a shared goal among the employees to enhance the process of teaching and learning (Hallinger & Lee, 2013).

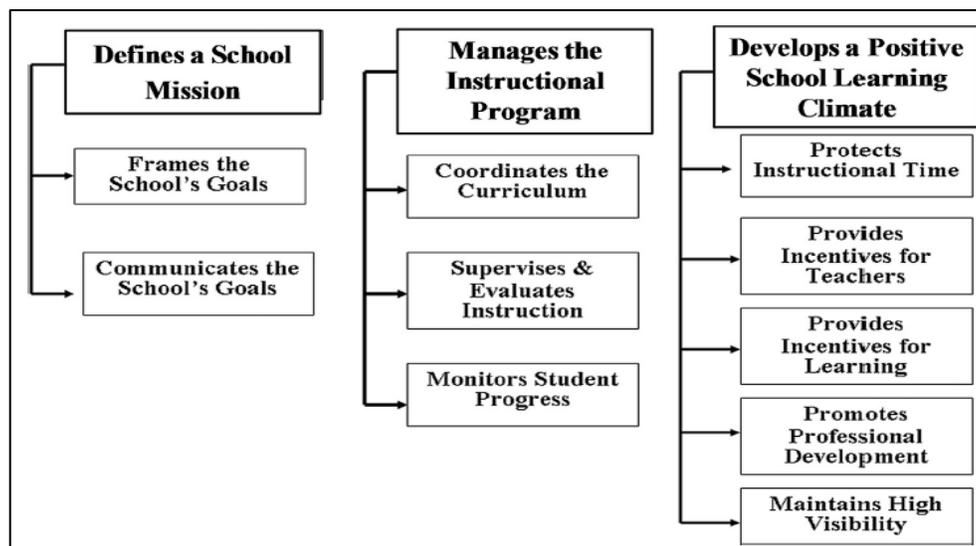


Figure 1 PIMRS Instructional Leadership Model Framework (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985)

2.3 Previous Studies Related to Framing Academic Goals and Communicating Academic Goals

Setting academic goals can lead to student's motivation to accomplish higher academic achievement (Schunk, 2009). Therefore, if the academic goal setting is implemented correctly, it has the potential to impact the learning positively. According to Dotson (2016), there are four steps are used to ensure the successful of the academic goal implementation. The steps are; 1) setting goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time sensitive, 2) developing an action plan, 3) monitoring the progress frequently, and 4) identifying the achievement of goals.

Goal framing is one of the practical tools that can assist in governing one's own cognitive and motivational processes (Thomas, 2015). Goal framing is important as it relates to assisting student's performance especially underperforming or disengaged students because of the effect goals have on students (Lindenberg, 2007). It is school leaders' role to framing the school goals and to framing the school academic goals. The

school leaders need to determine the areas on which school staff will focus their devotion and resources during a given academic year (Latip, 2006). When framing goals, the past and current data of student performance should be combined including the staff responsibilities to achieve the goals (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). It is also the role of school leaders to give guidance while defining school goals (McEwan, 2003). Therefore, school leaders need to involve the staff and the teachers because their experiences will be used as a groundwork to determine the goals as they can give important information based on their experience (Salleh, 2013).

As an instructional leader, communicating and explaining school goals is one of the important roles of a school leader (Salleh, 2013). One of the characteristics of the effective school is the leader usually shared clear goals among the school community (Wildy & Dimmock, 1993). Through communications, the school leader can discuss and review the school goals with the employees intermittently during the school academic year in the context of instructional, curricular, and budgetary decisions, so that they can ensure that every staff understood the importance of school goals (Salleh, 2013). Communications either formal communication or informal communication can be utilised to explain about the school's mission. Example of informal communication is conversations among staff and example of formal communication are goal statements, staff bulletin boards, curricular and staff meeting (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Hoy & Hoy, 2009). Meeting is one of the communication that is used to share information and make decisions regarding problems that need to be solved (Leach et al., 2009).

Communication which has used wireless Internet-based technologies present more interactive form of way to communicate and this allows the employees to collaborate in a cybernetic setting (Castells, 2010). Therefore, simply by having a smart phone, all employees will be available at 24 hours basis (Ouye, 2011). WhatsApp messenger is one of the technology used in smart phones and become popular nowadays (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). WhatsApp messenger was created by Brian Acton and Jan Koum in 2009 to make delivery of multimedia become easier, faster, and cheaper compared to SMS. Besides, in education itself, WhatsApp can be used for enhancement of discussions and information sharing (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). Therefore, school leaders can use WhatsApp messenger to discuss or share information about the school goals.

2.4 Theoretical Background

There are principles for effective teaching and learning; 1) to make connections with the student's existing knowledge structure, teaching must begin with a content and familiar experiences, 2) the knowledge given should not change the students cognitive model too extreme or drastic, 3) the teaching aimed is to empower the students with skill to be independent, and be able to use relevant information from various sources to solve the problems and challenges, and 4) the learning activities more to cooperative learning that involve with the students working in small groups and discussing to find the answer (Makgato, 2012). Therefore, through constructivist learning theory instructional leader can use the principles in the theory to improve the classroom instruction and create a clear academic goals.

In instructional leadership model, an instructional leader has to create a clear goal to focus on the student learning (Hallinger, 2005). Piaget (1969) believed that the main goal of education is to help the child learn how to learn. In order to implement a constructivist classroom, a teacher firstly must state a clear goal so that the implementation process is successful. Therefore, through the constructivist learning theory, an instructional leader can use this learning theory as a guideline to state clear school's academic goals. As an instructional leader, it is part of their responsibility to make sure the staff of the school understand the goals that they need to achieve especially in school's academic goals.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design for this study is quantitative descriptive design. Descriptive research involves collecting data that report events and then followed by organising, tabulating, depicting and describing the data collection (Glass & Hopkins, 1984). The descriptive study purpose is to collect, compile, and summarize the information obtained from the phenomenon studied to ensure a complex information becomes easy to understand (Punch, 2000). The independent variables of this study are the school leaders frame the the school goals and communicate the school goals while the dependent variable of this study is the school goals.

3.2 Sampling

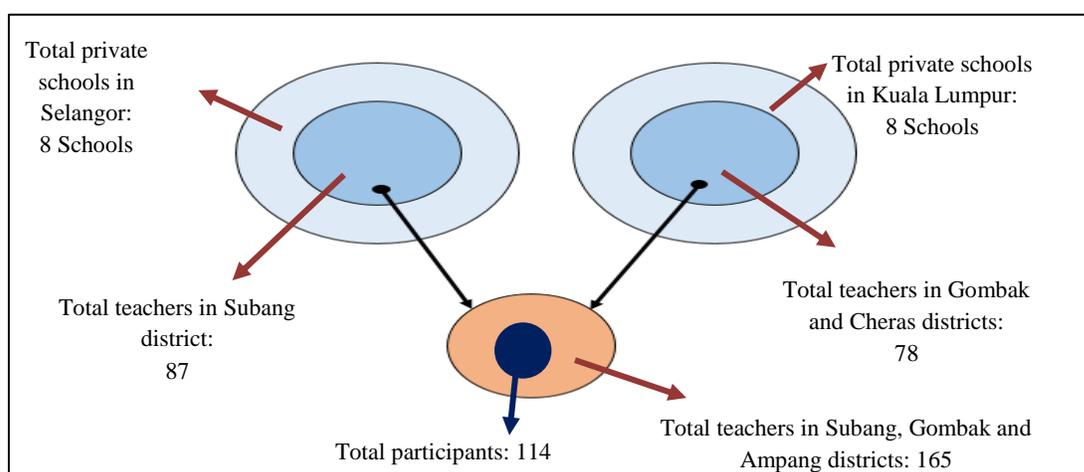


Figure 2 Research Sampling

The total number of private schools in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur are 14 and 8 respectively. Despite the large number of private schools, this study was conducted in two districts in Kuala Lumpur and one district in Selangor. The two districts involved in Kuala Lumpur are Gombak and Cheras with the number of teachers are 27 and 51 respectively. Meanwhile, Subang was the selected district in Selangor with 87 teachers. The private schools involved in this study were Sekolah Sri Bestari (Primary), Gombak; Taylor International School, Cheras; and Sekolah Seri Cahaya, Subang. Therefore, the total number of population for this study are 165 (Figure 2).

Despite of the large number of population, cluster sampling method was used in this research. The advantages of employing the cluster random sampling are it can be used when it is trying or impossible to select a random sample of individuals as samples and it is less time consuming (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). Krejcie and Morgan (1970) produced a table in determining the sample size. Referring to the table when the number of population is 165, the sample size will be 113. The total of 165 questionnaire were distributed to the teachers in private schools involved. However, the number of respondents returned the questionnaire was 114. Therefore, the number of participants in this study is 114.

3.3 Instrumentation

This study focused on how the school leaders of private school defining the school mission. Therefore, this study has adopted and adapted the first and second construct in the instrument developed by Hallinger (2011). The constructs are (a) framing the school goals, and (b) communicating the school goals. These two constructs are to find out how the school leaders defined the school mission. The questionnaire had three sections. Section A consisted the first construct which is framing the school goals and section B consisted the second construct which is communicating the school goals. There were 7 items in section A and 5 items in section B. These two sections used 5-point Likert scale. The purpose of using Likert scale is to measure the extent of participant agreement with each item (McNabb, 2015). The respondent's demographic data was collected form section C of the questionnaire.

In this study, pilot study was conducted at Sekolah Sri Bestari (Secondary) before the questionnaire was distribute to the respondents. This to ensure that the instrument use will obtain high validity and reliability, and to prevent any problem that might occur during the actual study (Lim, et al., 2007). Alpha Cronbach value for the all the items in the questionnaire is 0.845. Meanwhile, the alpha Cronbach value for the first and second construct in the questionnaire is 0.729 and 0.605. The instrument is in high reliability when the alpha Cronbach value more than 0.6 (Mohd Majid, 1998). Therefore, the questionnaire is reliable and can be used as a research instrument.

3.4 Research Procedure

The procedure of this study started by identifying the problem statement of the study. Then the literature review regarding the role of instructional leadership, the conceptual framework used for instructional leadership, the mission, vision and statement, academic goals implementation, framing the academic goals, communicating the academic goals, and theoretical background of the study. Then, the instrument of the study was prepared by adopting and adapting the instrument developed by Hallinger in 2011. The questionnaire consists of two construct framing and communicating the academic school goals with the total of 12 items.

This study conducted the pilot test at Sekolah Sri Bestari (Secondary) on 17th January 2017. Overall alpha Cronbach value is 0.845 and the value of alpha Cronbach in the first construct, framing the school's academic goals is 0.729 and the second construct, communicating the school's academic goals is 0.605. Based on the results, the items number 11 and 12 on communicating construct were changed specifically on technology used in communicating. At first, the population of this study was situated in Subang, Selangor. There are two private schools in this area, Sekolah Seri Cahaya and Asia Pasific International School.

The questionnaire of this study was distributed through friends who are working as teachers. However, only Sekolah Seri Cahaya returned the questionnaire on 22nd February 2017 and nothing was received from Asia Pasific International School. Therefore, the population of this study was changed by adding schools in Kuala Lumpur. The districts involved were Gombak and Cheras and the areas were represented by Sekolah Seri Bestari (Primary and Taylor International School. Table 1 shows the dates involved in distribution of the questionnaire. The total questionnaire distributed in this three school was 165 but the returned questionnaire was 114. Therefore, the total participants of this study was 114.

Table 1: The dates involved in distribution the questionnaire.

Date	Remarks
17 th Jan 2017	Conduct pilot study
3 rd Feb 2017	Distribute questionnaire to Sekolah Seri Cahaya and Asia Pasific International School
22 nd Feb 2017	Questionnaire returned from Sekolah Seri Cahaya
14 th Mar 2017	Distribute questionnaire to Sekolah Seri Bestari (Primary)
17 th Mar 2017	Questionnaire returned from Sekolah Sri Bestari (Primary)
31 st Mar 2017	Distribute questionnaire to Taylor International School
14 th Apr 2017	Questionnaire returned from Taylor International School

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

The data findings for the first research question is presented in mean and standard deviation. The data in this study was analyzed using Statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 20.0. Table 2 determines the level of mean score on how private school leaders' frames and communicates the school's academic goals.

Table 2: Mean score level determination

Mean Score	Measure Level
3.01 to 5.00	High
3.00	Moderate
0.00 to 2.99	Low

(Source: Nor Hidayah, 2004)

RQ1: How do private school leaders frame their schools' academic goals?

Table 3: The mean level of private school leaders frame the schools' academic goals.

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Score Measure Level
1	My school leader have developed a focused set of school-wide goals.	3.8421	.54169	High
2	My school leaders have framed school's goals in terms of staff responsibilities to achieve them.	3.8246	.58364	High
3	My school leaders have used formal methods such as needs assessment to secure staff input on goal development.	3.7193	.63118	High
4	My school leaders have used needs assessment or informal methods such informal discussions to secure input on goal development.	3.7632	.72016	High
5	My school leaders have used data on student performance when developing the school's academic goals.	3.7895	.61649	High
6	My school leaders have developed goals that are easily understood by teachers in the school.	3.7544	.61775	High
7	My school leaders have developed goals that are easily used by teachers in the school.	3.7982	.62655	High
Total		3.7845	.42762	High

Table 3 shows the total mean score of private school leaders frame the school's academic goals is 3.7845 with standard deviation of 0.42762. This indicated that the school's academic goals set by the private school leaders is in high level. The data shows the private school leaders have established a focused set of school-wide goals for the school when it obtain the highest mean score of 3.8421 and standard deviation 0.54169.

The second highest of the mean score is 3.8246 and standard deviation 0.58364. This shows the school leaders set the school's goals followed the staff responsibilities to achieve them. Other than that, the data shows the leaders of private school have used formal methods such as assessment to obtain the input on goal development from the staff with the mean score of 3.7193 and standard deviation 0.63118.

RQ2: How do private school leaders communicate the schools' academic goals?

Table 4: The mean level of private school leaders communicate the schools' academic goals.

No	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Score Measure Level
8	My school leaders have discussed the school's academic goals with teachers during faculty's meetings.	3.9123	.61775	High
9	My school leaders have referred to the school's academic goals when preparing the teachers' handbook.	3.7456	.75036	High
10	My school leaders have ensured that the school's academic goals are displayed in highly visible displays in the school (e. g., posters or bulletin boards emphasizing academic progress).	3.6930	.78849	High
11	My school leaders have communicated the school's academic goals through the use of email.	3.5000	.81197	High
12	My school leaders have communicated the school's academic goals through the use of WhatsApp.	3.2544	1.26779	High
Total		3.6211	.54423	High

Table 4 shows the private school leaders communicate the school's academic goals is in high level with total mean score is 3.6211 and standard deviation 0.54423. The highest mean score is 3.9123 and standard deviation 0.61775. This shows the school leaders have communicate the school's academic goals during meeting. The second highest of mean score is 3.7456 and standard deviation 0.75036. This shows the school leaders have referred to school's academic goals when preparing the teachers' handbook. The data shows most of the school leaders used email as a communication medium to deliver the school's academic goals compared to the usage of WhatsApp technology with the mean score 3.5000 and 3.2544 respectively, and standard deviation are 0.81197 and 1.26779.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Findings for RQ1: How do private school leaders frame their schools' academic goals?

The findings show that most of the private school leaders have developed a set of goals used by the whole school and set the school's goals followed the staff responsibilities to accomplish the goals. According to Hallinger (2003), instructional leadership created the set of goals for the staff to follow and reward them if they achieved the goals. When developing the goal of the whole school, the data shows that school leaders at Taylor International School are practicing the instructional leadership. One of the reasons is Taylor International School offered an international curriculum compared to Sekolah Sri Bestari and Sekolah Sri Cahaya.

Not only that, the findings show the school leaders of this study have used the formal methods such as assessment and informal methods such as discussion to obtain the input from the staff for goal development. The experience of staff on giving the input or information on goal development process is important. This statement was supported by Salleh (2013), as he stated that the school leaders need the staff and teachers experience to be used as a foundation for determining the school goals as they can give important information based on their experience.

The findings shows that private school leaders in Sekolah Seri Cahaya have used the formal methods to obtain the information or input from the staff. Formal methods is appropriate to used compare than informal methods when involving with the huge number of teachers in school. Compare to Sekolah Seri Cahaya, the school leaders at Sekolah Sri Bestari which have a small numbers of teachers preferred to use the informal method to obtain the input from the staff on goal development.

4.2.1 Findings for RQ2: How do private school leaders communicate the schools' academic goals?

The findings show that most of the school leaders use verbal communication when communicating the school's academic goals. This shows that the school leaders of the private schools have discussed the school's academic goal during staff meeting to collect information, to make decision and solve the problem. As stated by Leach (2009), meeting is one of the communication that are used to achieve goals such as sharing information, making decision and solving problems. The finding shows that Sekolah Seri Cahaya used verbal as communication medium compared to the other schools. Meeting is more appropriate to use in communication when involving with to the large number of the staff.

The findings show that the school leaders have used the written communication to communicate the school's academic goals. The school leaders of this study used formal communication when preparing the teachers' handbook and displayed the school's academic goals using posters or bulletin boards. Among three private schools in this study, school leaders at Sekolah Sri Bestari have used the teachers' handbook as a medium to communicate the school's academic goals among teachers. Meanwhile, Sekolah Seri Cahaya used bulletin boards or posters to communicate the school academic goals. This shows that displays the school's academic goals is suitable for the large number of staff therefore, they can refer to the goals anytime they need.

The finding shows the school leaders have use the technology to communicate the school's academic goals. The school leaders of this study use email and WhatsApp messenger to communicate the school's academic goals among the staff. This is because communication through technology allows the employees to be reached at all means. As stated by Ouye (2011), having a smart phone, all employees will be available at 24 hours basis. Not only that, WhatsApp messenger is the popular technology nowadays and it is easy to use, faster, and cheaper compares to SMS (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014).

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, to accomplish defining the school's academic goals, a school leader must understand how to frame or set academic goals and communicate the goals among staff and teachers. The goal development inputs from the staff and students performance are important. The school leaders have to develop clear goals that easily be understood by the staff and the teachers to ensure the accomplishment of the goals. Based on the result inputs from the teachers and the staff, they are important for the goal development. The inputs can be obtained either from formal methods or informal methods.

Communication is important to ensure that every staff and teacher understands the goals that need to be accomplished. The role of the instructional leader is to ensure that clear goals can be shared among the staff of the school. The school leaders need to know how to use a medium to deliver the message or information among the school members. The results show most of the private school leaders use verbal communication when communicating the school goals. Meeting is one of the communication that is used to obtain the input or information about the school's academic goals.

Technology development plays an important role in communication. Nowadays, school leaders need to know how to use the technology as a medium to deliver the information. WhatsApp messenger is the new

technology that can be used to share the information. The result shows that the private school leaders used email and WhatsApp messenger to share the information of the school's academic goals.

In conclusion, the first dimension in PIMRS conceptual model can be used as a guideline or reference for all school leaders when setting the goals for the school. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the private school leaders in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor are applying the instructional leadership in the management.

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