Instructional Boundary Management: The Complementarity of Instructional Leadership

and Boundary Management

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Abstract

Instructional leadership, which emphasizes the teaching and learning aspects of school principalship, is an essential ingredient for improving student achievement. At the same time, boundary management, which includes both internal and external boundary activities, is intrinsic to today's schools and poses one of the most persistent and potentially rewarding challenges to principals. The current study seeks to explore the overlap of these two frameworks and the ways in which they complement each other both conceptually and practically. Data collection included interviews with a diverse sample of 37 Israeli principals. Data analysis identified behaviors of principals that reflected instructional leadership and boundary management simultaneously. Findings suggested a new area of school leadership – instructional boundary management, which is a synthesis of instructional leadership and boundary management, where the two different frameworks merge with each other rather than compete for the principal's attention and limited time.

Instructional Boundary Management: The Complementarity of Instructional Leadership and Boundary Management

In recent decades, researchers and professionals throughout the world have argued that principals should engage in instructional leadership (Shaked, 2018; Hallinger and Wang, 2015; Kaparou and Bush, 2016; Park and Ham, 2016). The instructional leadership framework, which requires the principal to be intensely engaged in the improvement of curriculum and instruction, arose from the close correlation between quality of instruction and academic results (Bush and Glover, 2014; Murphy et al., 2016). Research findings have been clear: Teaching quality is the strongest predictor of student outcomes (Stronge, 2018). When it comes to student performance on reading and math tests, the teacher is estimated to have two to three times the impact of any other school-related factor, such as curriculum and student grouping patterns (Blazar, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Consistently high-quality instruction, which is a prerequisite for the results that are especially valued in today's era of accountability for school outcomes, requires constant nurturing and guidance by the school's instructional leader (Glickman et al., 2017). Moreover, an instructional leadership mindset includes a profound moral purpose focused on promoting learning experiences and opportunities for all students (Shaked, 2018). Therefore, principals are constantly asked to concentrate on their instructional leadership role by means of in-depth involvement in teaching and learning for all students (Le Fevre and Robinson, 2015).

Moreover, new trends towards decentralization and policy implementation at the school level have increased the individual school's decision-making authority. Greater autonomy at the local level has transformed schools into open systems in a close relationship with their resource-providing environment (Addi-Raccah, 2015; Kohansal, 2015). In order to be able to respond to expectations and standards set by external agents, principals are required to assume the role of

facilitating the transfer of assets and information about the school and its surroundings (Bogler and Nir, 2017; Benoliel and Somech, 2018). They must walk a tightrope between internal needs and capacities and external desires and demands that come from official (such as the district) and unofficial (such as the school community) sources, facilitating and reaching agreements among various stakeholders (Valli et al., 2018). Against this backdrop, principals are increasingly involved in boundary management, aimed at regulating the boundary that separates the school from its environment (Thomson and Thomson, 2013). In this regard, research shows that principals seek to ensure that the school boundary becomes neither too tightly delineated nor too permeable (Benoliel, 2017; Benoliel and Somech, 2018). On the one hand, principals can maintain a tight boundary around the school, creating an environment that strengthens the feeling of belonging on the part of the school's staff, protecting the school from information overload, and reducing external pressures. On the other hand, by keeping a loose boundary around the school principals can promote the search for new information, mobilize support and legitimacy, and increase attentiveness to changes in the school environment. Striving to balance the permeability of the school boundary, principals have to ascribe much attention to boundary management, which comprises a wide range of boundary activities.

Today's principals, who are constantly asked to demonstrate instructional leadership (Murphy et al., 2016; Kaparou and Bush, 2016), run systems that are characterized by growing openness (Yemini et al., 2016) and therefore are often engaged in boundary activities (Louis and Robinson, 2012; Valli et al., 2018). Thus, principals have to juggle the two demanding roles of instructional leaders and boundary managers. The current study explores how instructional leadership and boundary management can function in a reciprocal way so as to complement or substitute for each other.

The existing literature on instructional leadership often stops at the school boundary and concludes that principals should be focused primarily on the internal processes of teaching and learning. These includes tasks such as coordinating curriculum, observing classrooms, and monitoring student achievement (Hallinger and Wang, 2015; Murphy et al., 2016). However, instructional leadership involves not only an internal focus but also significant outward focus, such as searching for external innovative instructional knowledge and mobilizing support for instructional programs from outside the school (Glickman et al., 2017; May and Supovitz, 2011). At the same time, traditional boundary management emphasizes the principal's activities outside the school boundaries, viewing the principal as a boundary spanner who must build and maintain relationships with individuals and groups outside the school to develop partnerships and collaboration (Addi-Raccah, 2015). Yet, since internal activities have also been classified as part of boundary management, boundary management involves not only external activities directed at interacting with the school's environment but also important internal boundary activities, which are focused on matters taking place within the school boundary and designed to sharpen the school boundary from within (Benoliel and Somech, 2018).

Since both instructional leadership and boundary management are made up of internal and external aspects, the current study attempts to capture the area of overlap between these two frameworks. Looking for principals' behaviors that reflect both instructional leadership and boundary activities, the current study seeks to illustrate the interplay between instructional leadership and boundary management through qualitative methods in a heterogeneous sample of Israeli principals. As a platform for this study, the following sections present the principles and elements of these two frameworks.

Conceptualization and Benefits of Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership can be explained as an educational leadership approach whereby principals are involved in a wide range of activities aiming at improving teaching and learning for all students (Brazer and Bauer, 2013). Simply put, instructional leadership requires principals to focus their efforts on the core activities of education, which are teaching and learning that directly affects student achievement (Neumerski, 2012). Researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners have called upon principals to demonstrate instructional leadership (Hallinger and Wang, 2015). Top priority should be given to student learning and academic results, while everything else is of lesser priority (Rigby, 2014).

A large pool of research links principals' instructional leadership to positive school outcomes, including improved teacher practices and higher student achievement rates, across a variety of organizational contexts (e.g., elementary, middle, and high schools; public, private, and public charter schools), spatial contexts (e.g., urban/suburban), and temporal contexts from 1980 through the present (e.g., Glickman et al., 2017; May and Supovitz, 2011; Sammons et al., 2010; Supovitz et al., 2010). The requirement for principals to assume responsibility for instructional leadership has been spreading across educational systems throughout the world (Kaparou and Bush, 2016; Park and Ham, 2016). Thus, scholars contend that contemporary school principals should engage in instructional leadership as one of their core responsibilities (Louis et al., 2010; Murphy and Torre, 2014; Neumerski, 2012).

Over the years, researchers have provided a multitude of frameworks to capture instructional leadership (e.g., May and Supovitz, 2011; Murphy et al., 2016; Supovitz et al., 2010). The conceptual framework of instructional leadership presented by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) is one of the most widely used in research (Hallinger and Wang, 2015). This framework consists

of three dimensions for this leadership role, which are delineated into ten instructional leadership functions: (1) The dimension of *defining the school mission* incorporates two functions: framing the school's goals and communicating the school's goals. The principal is responsible for ensuring a clear mission, which focuses on all students' academic progress, and for disseminating this mission carefully to staff. (2) The dimension of *managing the instructional program* includes three functions: coordinating curriculum, supervising and evaluating instruction, and monitoring student progress. This dimension focuses on the principal's role in coordinating and controlling the school's academic program. (3) The dimension of *developing a positive school learning climate* is broadest in scope, and includes five functions: protecting instructional time, providing incentives for teachers, providing incentives for learning, promoting professional development, and maintaining high visibility.

Summarizing existing research related to the practices that principals use to engage in instructional leadership, Stronge and his colleagues (2008) pointed to five main domains: building and sustaining a school vision that establishes clear learning goals and garners schoolwide – and even communitywide – commitment to these goals; sharing leadership by developing the expertise of teacher leaders towards better school performance; leading a learning community that provides meaningful staff development; gathering data for utilization in instructional decision-making; and monitoring curriculum and instruction by spending time in classrooms in order to effectively encourage curriculum implementation and quality instructional practices.

While educational administration research has looked at the need for the principal to be aware of both the external and internal environments, claiming that negotiating both is a key element of effective principalship (e.g., Addi-Raccah, 2015; Shaked and Schechter, 2017; Kohansal, 2015; Louis and Robinson, 2012; Salter, 2014), studies on instructional leadership gave

notable prominence to internal processes of improving teaching and curriculum. According to the instructional leadership literature, principals are expected to focus their attention on the inner world of the school, prioritizing activities directly related to the quality of teaching and student learning (Hallinger and Wang, 2015; Murphy et al., 2016). However, activities directed towards external stakeholders, which are intended for instructional purposes, such as acquiring pedagogical knowledge, establishing academic collaborations, and mobilizing resources for implementing new programs, are also an integral part of instructional leadership (Glickman et al., 2017). Instructional leadership focuses on both the extra- and intra-school worlds, which can only promote learning and achievement together.

Fundamentals and Components of Principals' Boundary Activities

Research shows that far from being self-contained, isolated systems, schools are nested organizations having multiple connections employed to increase the interdependence of the school with elements in its environment (Valli et al., 2018; Wang, 2016). These connections turn schools into open systems, which are embedded in an environment that may include parents, community members, school district personnel, government agencies, and other external stakeholders upon which the school relies for many of its instructional materials and resources (Ng, 2013). Contemporary schools' boundaries are permeable and blurred, characterized by reciprocal influences between schools and outside elements and the establishment of new relational patterns (Liu and Feng, 2015). Inasmuch as schools cannot generate all necessary resources from within but rather depend on their environment for resources essential for their survival (Addi-Raccah, 2015), principals must span the boundary and enable high levels of interactions with critical external parties (Casto et al., 2016). Thus, maintaining healthy relations with external constituencies in the school environment has become a pivotal role of principals (Benoliel and

Somech, 2018 Valli et al. 2018).

Our point of departure is the typology of Druskat and Wheeler (2003), which illustrated how boundary management includes both internal and external boundary activities. Boundary management research has shifted its focus from a trade-off (either/or) to a paradoxical (both/and) perspective (Author, 2017; Lewis et al., 2014; Russ, 2018). Therefore, although internal and external boundary activities may compete for the leader's limited time and resources, research has recognized the importance of balancing seemingly contradictory tensions rather than suppressing tensions (Jahanmir, 2016; Leslie et al., 2018; Somech and Naamneh, 2017). From the perspective of the resource dependence theory, the requirement to maintain contacts with outside agencies is intended to enhance organizational efficiency and promote the organization's core technology (Davis and Cobb, 2010). Benoliel (Benoliel, 2017; Benoliel and Somech, 2018) explored the typology of Druskat and Wheeler (2003) in the school context, in order to gain a thorough understanding of school principals' boundary management activities. Principals' boundary activities focus alternatively on internal and external issues relative to the school. We draw upon her research as a basis for discussing the internal and external boundary activities of school principals.

Internal activities. Internal activities are activities focused on internal school matters occurring within the school boundary. Internal activities serve to distinguish the school from its environment because these activities enable the establishment of the school's own workspace, distinctiveness, and purposes, thereby refining the school boundary from within (Choi, 2002). The *relating* activity involves such behaviors as building trust among faculty staff and demonstrating fairness to school members in the decision-making process (Berkovich, 2018; Berkovich and Eyal, 2018; Druskat and Wheeler, 2003). Internal activities also include *scouting* for information about

strengths and weaknesses, and the difficult issues faculty staff face. This is accomplished by examining problems methodically (Barnett and McCormick, 2012; Druskat and Wheeler, 2003). Principals initiate communication with school staff in an effort to acquire information about internal events, experiences, and needs in order to identify and clarify information that might be useful to the decision-making process (Benoliel, 2017). Internal activities also include *persuading* activities, meaning the extent to which the principal persuades faculty staff to set priorities in line with school goals and to create a common vision (Muijs and Harris, 2003). A common vision may be a source for creating a shared language, ultimately transforming the individual ideas of school members into shared school instructional processes and practices. A common vision gathers school staff for a combined effort, enhancing commitment to school goals and instructional processes (Yukl, 2013). *Empowering* activities involve delegating authority, exercising flexibility regarding school staff decisions, and coaching.

     External activities. External activities are activities through which the principal represents the school to external stakeholders to access and secure resources and support, and monitors the external environment for information or events that could hinder or enhance the achievement of school goals (Kirby and Dipaola, 2011). The external activities of *relating* involve building positive relationships between the school and external stakeholders, such as learning about external stakeholders' power structures and arrangements as well as maintaining positive connections with parents and the community (Addi-Raccah, 2015). Principals constantly span the boundary by collaborating and cooperating with key communities outside of the school (Benoliel, 2017). External activities involve *scouting* and searching for information from external stakeholders in order to identify important environmental events, and sharing this information with faculty members. Research indicates that strong partnerships with local institutions and mutually

productive relationships with parents can help to provide important pedagogical and instructional resources (Valli et al., 2018). Acting as a filter and facilitator, principal boundary spanning activities can protect the school core from information overload (Millward and Timperley, 2010). External *persuading* activities involve obtaining external support for the school. This means presenting the school to external stakeholders in a way that safeguards the interests of the school and maximizes the support available to the school (Benoliel and Somech, 2018).

The present study utilizes the literatures on instructional leadership and boundary management to identify the areas of overlap of these two frameworks. A fairly extensive body of research has been carried out on instructional leadership and its possible contribution to student performance in recent decades (Glickman et al., 2017; Murphy et al., 2016). Recently, the topic of boundary management has also begun to receive more scholarly attention (Benoliel, 2017; Benoliel and Somech, 2018). However, no previous study has dealt with the question of how these two frameworks may interact. Therefore, the current study provides an important opportunity to advance the understanding of the interrelationships between instructional leadership and boundary management.

Method

The current study is qualitative in nature, in order to provide rich textual descriptions of instructional leadership and boundary management. Using basic qualitative design, interview methodology and content analysis were selected for this study to enable in-depth understanding of principals' behaviors. This approach is most appropriate when the overall aim is to describe a phenomenon and when existing literature or theory on the phenomenon is limited (Taylor et al., 2016). This section describes this study's sample, data collection, and analytical strategies.

Participants

This study focused on Israeli school principals. The national school system in Israel serves about 1.6 million students (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2013), and is similar in many ways to that of the United States (BenDavid-Hadar, 2016). The primary role of Israeli school principals as articulated by Capstones, the institute that is responsible for school principals' development in Israel, is to serve as instructional leaders in order to improve the education and learning of all students. Four additional areas of management support this function: designing the school's future image—developing a vision and bringing about change; leading the staff and nurturing its professional development; focusing on the individual; and managing the relationship between the school and the surrounding community (Capstones, 2008).

Seeking to maximize the richness and depth of data, maximal differentiation sampling (Creswell, 2014), also known as heterogeneous sampling, was used. This purposive sampling technique captures a wide range of perspectives, obtaining deeper insights into a phenomenon by contemplating it from various angles (Merriam, 2009). Maximal differentiation sampling was implemented in this study regarding principals' sex, age, years of experience, education, school level (elementary, middle, high), and school community's socioeconomic status. Thus, the study involved 37 principals, 12 males and 25 females. Participants had 11 to 32 years of educational experience ($M = 20.41$, $SD = 5.89$), which included 3 to 21 years of experience as principals ($M = 9.46$, $SD = 5.34$). Most of the 37 participants ($n = 32$) held a master's degree, with 4 principals holding only a bachelor's degree and 1 principal holding a Ph.D. Participants were principals of elementary schools ($n = 18$), middle schools ($n = 3$), and high schools ($n = 16$), working in all seven Israeli school districts. *Table 1* summarizes study participants' demographic information.

Table 1: Study Participants' Demographic Information

	Pseudonym	Sex	Educational Experience	Leadership Experience	School Level	Education
1	Alice	Female	22	12	Elementary	MA
2	Anne	Female	13	5	High	MA
3	Barbara	Female	26	14	Elementary	MA
4	Bob	Male	21	12	Middle	MA
5	Carol	Female	17	3	Elementary	MA
6	Charles	Male	18	7	High	MA
7	Christopher	Male	22	9	Elementary	MA
8	Daniel	Male	32	12	Elementary	MA
9	David	Male	11	3	Elementary	MA
10	Deborah	Female	30	10	Elementary	MA
11	Donald	Male	17	3	Elementary	MA
12	Dorothy	Female	17	9	Elementary	MA
13	Ebony	Female	16	4	Elementary	MA
14	Elizabeth	Female	32	19	Elementary	BA
15	Esther	Female	24	16	Elementary	MA
16	George	Male	24	12	Middle	MA
17	Gloria	Female	26	17	High	MA
18	Jacob	Male	31	21	Middle	MA
19	John	Male	14	4	High	PhD
20	Kate	Female	14	5	Elementary	MA
21	Kimberly	Female	29	21	Elementary	BA
22	Laura	Female	22	13	Middle	MA
23	Linda	Female	20	11	High	MA
24	Lisa	Female	17	8	High	MA
25	Margaret	Female	14	5	High	MA
26	Martha	Female	18	9	Middle	MA
27	Melissa	Female	17	6	Elementary	MA
28	Michelle	Female	29	18	Middle	MA
29	Monica	Female	21	4	Elementary	MA
30	Noah	Male	22	11	Elementary	BA

31	Patricia	Female	16	5	Elementary	MA
32	Philip	Male	17	6	Elementary	MA
33	Richard	Male	20	9	Elementary	BA
34	Ruth	Female	24	14	High	MA
35	Sandra	Female	13	6	Middle	MA
36	Sara	Female	13	3	Elementary	MA
37	Sharon	Female	16	4	Elementary	MA

Interview Measure and Procedure

Data were collected through interviews. For ethical reasons, all participants were informed at the beginning of the interview that their participation was voluntary and that they could exit the study at any point (no one exited). They were assured of confidentiality (pseudo-names were assigned) and were asked to provide written consent, based on understanding of the research aim.

Interviews were semi-structured, where the interviewer developed and used an "interview guide" (i.e., list of questions and topics needing to be covered) that also enabled "the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 2009: 90). Key questions were preplanned, but the interviews were also conversational, with questions flowing from previous responses when possible.

The interview sought to identify behaviors that reflected instructional leadership and boundary management simultaneously. However, it intentionally avoided mention of the terms "instructional leadership" and "boundary activities" to prevent priming interviewees to frame their discussions in this light. Thus, the interview included questions such as: "As a principal, what are your main goals in your work, and what do you do to accomplish them?"; "What relationships do you have with people and entities as part of your principalship?"; and "As a principal, how do you respond to external influences and expectations?".

Interviews, which generally lasted one hour, were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Follow-up interviews were also conducted, as appropriate, to clarify questions that arose during a

review of interview transcripts. In addition, the member check method (Koelsch, 2013) was used. All interviewees were asked to check both accuracy and interpretation.

Data Analysis

During data analysis, each segment of data (utterance) was coded according to its meaning (Tracy, 2013). This coding was theory-driven, as it was based on a-priori codes (Flick, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Rossman and Rallis, 2012). We first utilized the conceptual frameworks of instructional leadership elaborated by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) and Stronge and his colleagues (2008), mentioned above, to identify study participants' behaviors that reflected instructional leadership. We then examined whether these behaviors corresponded to the typology of boundary management, which was initially developed by Druskat and Wheeler (2003) and then explored by Benoliel (Benoliel, 2017; Benoliel and Somech, 2018) to present the internal and external boundary activities of school principals. The purposes of this theory-driven, inductive data analysis were to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief summary format, to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data and ensure that these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research), and to develop a theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the text data (Thomas, 2006).

As in any qualitative exploration, attention was paid to how the researchers' background and personal experience might affect our interpretation of data. The first author's extensive experience as a principal of both elementary and high schools, his acquaintance with qualitative research methods, and his knowledge about instructional leadership, made it easier to identify instructional leadership behaviors of study participants. The second author's broad knowledge about school principal boundary management enabled her to examine whether these behaviors also

reflected boundary activities. Based on our complementing research interests and bodies of scholarly work, we were able to identify principals' behaviors that reflected instructional leadership and boundary management simultaneously. As the importance of reflective journals in qualitative research has been recognized (Ortlipp, 2008), the researchers wrote personal reflective research logs throughout the study to ensure critical thinking.

Findings

Qualitative data analysis suggested that principals were engaged in various behaviors that reflected instructional leadership and boundary management simultaneously. They were divided into (1) behaviors that reflected instructional leadership and internal boundary activities and (2) behaviors that reflected instructional leadership and external boundary activities. These behaviors are presented below, supported by participant excerpts.

Instructional Leadership and Internal Boundary Activities

Interviews conducted in this study revealed that the most prominent behavior that reflected instructional leadership and internal boundary activity simultaneously was spreading the school's goals of teaching and learning among teachers. This behavior, which was mentioned by 21 study participants, reflects communicating the school's instructional goals, which is a component of instructional leadership (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Hallinger and Wang, 2015; Stronge et al., 2008). It also reflects the *persuading* internal boundary activity (Benoliel, 2017). The goals of teaching and learning mentioned by study participants were varied, involving aims such as broadening students' knowledge base in a small number of key curricular domains, such as language and mathematics; achieving high results in external examinations; developing learning skills such as creative thinking and the ability to locate information; promoting students' love of learning; and cultivating enquiring minds. Importantly, study participants noted multiple ways in

which they deepen their teachers' connection to the school's vision of teaching and learning. For example Barbara, an elementary school principal with 14 years of experience as principal, described herself as taking advantage of every opportunity to talk about her school's pedagogical vision: "I talk to teachers over and over again, on many occasions, about our pedagogical vision, to ensure that all teachers speak in one voice." George, a middle school principal for 12 years, said he was working with teacher leaders who could influence other teachers: "To generate common commitment to our scholastic goals, I identify key players within the teaching staff who will motivate other teachers to buy into the vision. I want central teachers to believe these goals and to pass it on to others." Charles, a high school principal with 7 years of experience, emphasized that "Logic makes us think, emotion drives us to act. Emotion can come from analogies, stories, or concrete examples that illustrate to teachers what our tuitional success looks like."

One more behavior that reflected instructional leadership and internal boundary activity simultaneously was mobilizing leadership competence at all levels of the school in order to generate more opportunities for improving teaching, learning, and results. This idea was mentioned by 17 study participants. It reflects counting on the expertise of teacher leaders to improve school effectiveness, which is a component of instructional leadership (Stronge et al., 2008). At the same time, it reflects the internal boundary activity of *empowering* (Benoliel, 2017; Benoliel and Somech, 2018). Study participants described a wide range of responsibilities that they entrusted to teacher leaders, such as participating in the determination of instructional policies, guiding colleagues how to implement effective teaching strategies, explaining to colleagues how to follow content standards, sharing instructional resources such as Web sites, textbooks, lesson plans, and assessment tools, and facilitating professional learning communities among staff members. Data analysis suggested that female principals, when compared to male principals, described themselves

more frequently as working with teacher leaders in planning and setting goals. Most of the teacher-leaders mentioned by the study participants were formal middle leaders – teachers who officially have management responsibility for a team of teachers or for an aspect of the school's work, such as year heads, heads of departments, evaluation coordinators, instruction coordinators, and ICT coordinators. However, some others were informal leaders, whose roles emerged as teachers interact with their peers, based on their talents and experience.

Data analysis suggested that an additional behavior that reflected instructional leadership and internal boundary activity simultaneously was paying attention to instructional needs and difficulties of teachers. Meeting teachers' instructional needs and helping them solve their instructional problems clearly reflects the nucleus of instructional leadership, which requires principals to focus their efforts on improving teaching practices (Brazer and Bauer, 2013; Neumerski, 2012). Looking for teachers' needs, problems, strengths, and weaknesses also reflected the s*couting* internal boundary activity (Benoliel, 2017; Barnett and McCormick, 2012). This idea was mentioned by 8 interviewees, who pointed to a wide range of teachers' instructional needs they identified, such as autonomy, guidance, feedback, appreciation, available time, equipment, supplies, and working conditions. These principals ascribed importance to, and even proactively sought to understand, the instructional needs prioritized by teachers, even when these were not their own priorities. John, a high school principal with 4 years of experience, explained: "Principals have considerable control over the things that teachers desire most for their teaching, and many cost relatively little. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand what teachers want. You just have to ask and listen, that's all." Linda, a high school principal who began her tenure 11 years ago, expressed a similar point of view: "A principal who regularly engages with teachers and understands what they want for their teaching purpose is likely to be running a happy school whose

teachers are very satisfied." Interestingly, principals were aware that different teachers have different needs, as stated by Margaret, a high school principal who began her tenure 5 years ago: "Just like I expect teachers to know and understand their students as individuals and personalize their instruction according to the nuances of their learning, I must learn and meet my teachers' personalized needs related to their teaching." Additional interviews showed that while male principals concentrated mainly on things they themselves believed teachers needed, female principals also looked for things that teachers felt they needed for their teaching. Similarly, female principals were more frequently aware of the teachers' difficulties not only in taking care of students' learning and achievements, but also in making things easier for teachers.

The interviews with study participants revealed that 16 principals perceived building trust, which is an internal boundary activity of *relating* (Benoliel, 2017), as a foundation for their instructional leadership. For example Dorothy, an elementary school principal with 9 years of experience, viewed trust as the foundation for effective supervision: "My supervision practices are not an evaluation seeking to give a score. They are based on the good will of both sides to create opportunities for teachers to expand their capacity to teach effectively and to care for students." For Dorothy, the practice of professional supervision by school principals should involve supportive dialogue rather than judgment, thus requiring trust. More broadly Ruth, a high school principal who started in the position 14 years ago, aspired to create trust not only between her, as principal, and the teachers under her supervision, but also among the teachers themselves. She considered such trust as essential for open discourse about strengths and weaknesses in the school's teaching climate: "I strive to create a safe climate, in which teachers feel free to invite feedback regarding their teaching and results and share their perspectives in situations where there is a difference of opinion or conflict". Quite differently, Jacob, a middle school principal with 21

years of experience, downplayed the significance of healthy principal-teacher relationships: "The teachers and I are not here with the goal of being friends; we have a task, and it is my responsibility to see that this task is carried out in the best way possible." During the interview, Jacob also asserted: "I don't know what teachers feel towards me, and it is not of much interest to me. [However,] I certainly know that the school works well." Importantly, data analysis suggested that female principals integrated their instructional leadership with *relating* activities more frequently than their male counterparts. Female principals often depicted themselves as performing their instructional leadership role through attention to good relationships and collaboration.

Instructional Leadership and External Boundary Activities

Qualitative analysis pinpointed that one behavior, which reflected instructional leadership and external boundary activity simultaneously, was obtaining external stakeholders' support for the school's instructional goals. This idea came up in interviews with 13 participants. As mentioned above, communicating the school's instructional goals to various stakeholders is a component of instructional leadership (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985; Hallinger and Wang, 2015; Stronge et al., 2008). At the same time, it reflects the *persuading* external boundary activity (Benoliel, 2017). According to the descriptions of interviewees, while they, as principals, prioritized learning and achievements, some parents did not have the same opinion. Patricia, an elementary school principal with 5 years of experience, described parents that "What is most important to them is for their children to be happy." These parents wanted to reduce homework, the number of exams, and school workload. She had had many conversations with them, trying to convince them regarding school priorities: "We need to help our 'customers' [making quotation marks with his fingers] understand that the happiness of their children cannot be achieved without learning at a high level." Viewing parents as customers of the school's services, Patricia did not describe collaborative

thinking, but rather attempts to explain to parents why the academic priorities of the school were the right ones. Similarly Lisa, who had 8 years of experience as a high school principal, described parents who believed that the school's first and foremost goal should be to develop students morally and promote their desired character traits and good manners: "For me, face-to-face communication is ranked No. 1 for matching of expectations with parents. Raising young people of values is certainly important, but the main thing that happens in school is learning, and its importance cannot be underestimated." While Patricia and Lisa communicated their schools' instructional goals to parents, Noah, a high school principal with 17 years of experience, said that he had to convince local government officials of the importance of learning and academic outcomes: "The municipality wanted all schools to participate in a program that emphasized the non-academic, humanistic goals of education. I have spoken with them many times to convince them that we cannot neglect learning and achievement." Patricia, Lisa and Noah may represent a gender difference: female principals employed *persuading* activities mainly regarding parents, while male principals often employed *persuading* activities regarding authorities.

The search for information from external actors in order to acquire knowledge that might be useful to improve teaching and learning clearly reflected an instructional leadership orientation. At the same time, it also reflected the s*couting* external boundary activity. Inasmuch as it was based on social and political awareness, it reflected also external *relating* (Benoliel, 2017; Somech and Naamneh, 2017). Study participants were looking for information about curriculum and instruction through both formal and informal interactions with external actors. Richard, an elementary school principal with 9 years of experience, described himself as looking for instructional information in professional meetings: "I make sure to attend principal conferences, even though I have many of them, because that's where I keep up to date on standards,

examinations and new programs." Anne, a high school principal who began in her position 5 years ago, also sought information about educational techniques in conferences, but mainly through informal interactions with other principals: "When I go to principals' meetings, what matters to me is not the meetings themselves, but the conversations with other principals, when I hear many important things about teaching methods, learning materials, etc." Philip, an elementary school principal with 6 years of experience, said he was "Interested in what other schools do, to copy ideas and initiatives that might improve our achievements," and Alice, a high school principal with 12 years of experience, said she maintained close relationships with district officials "So as not to miss out and know first about new curriculums, exams and guidelines."

Discussion

The goal of this study was to identify internal and external behaviors that reflected instructional leadership and boundary management simultaneously. Qualitative data analysis revealed that instructional leadership behaviors depicted by study participants reflected mainly *persuading* as both an internal and an external boundary activity, where female principals focused mainly on internal *persuading* while male principals often focused on external *persuading*. In this context, principals participated in the current study referred primarily to communicating the school's instructional goals. For them, explaining instructional goals both inside and outside the school was needed to enable everyone to contribute to improving school performance. In addition, mobilizing leadership competence at all school levels to improve teaching and learning reflected the *empowering* internal boundary activity. Study participants described themselves as allowing teachers to take part in shaping instructional policy and sharing their instructional expertise with peers.

Meeting teachers' instructional needs and helping them solve their instructional problems,

as well as the search for information needed for improving instruction from external sources, reflected s*couting* as both an internal and an external boundary activity. The boundary activity of *relating* was perceived by study participants as a foundation for their instructional leadership role. To this end, principals participated in this study aspired to cultivate healthy relationships with various stakeholders. They continuously displayed a commitment to building trust, viewing it as a prerequisite to improving teaching methods. Interestingly, our findings revealed greater involvement of female principals in *relating* activities for instructional purposes, compared to their male counterparts. The explanation for this gender difference may be found in the literature, which claims that women use one-on-one contact and cultivate empathic and affective relationships with others much more than men (Chodorow, 2012). Accordingly, female principals often carry out their instructional leadership role through strong, positive principal-teacher relationships, while male principals usually fulfill this role in a more hierarchical and transactional way (Shaked, Gross and Glanz, 2019). The current study implies that when it comes to behaviors that reflect instructional leadership and boundary management simultaneously, a similar pattern emerges – female principals employ *relating* activities, which entail building trust and promoting close relationships, more frequently than their men counterparts, who generally make use of other activities. However, further research in a larger sample of principals is needed to establish this finding.

Conceptually, the current study relies on two educational leadership frameworks: instructional leadership and boundary management. On the one hand, the instructional leadership framework claims that principals should play a significant role in leading curriculum and instruction (Hallinger and Wang, 2015; Rigby, 2014). From this perspective, the principal should prioritize tasks such as setting school goals that result in student progress, helping teachers develop

the knowledge and skills needed to increase student achievement and independence, and using

multiple sources of information to assess performance (Brazer and Bauer, 2013; Glickman et al.,

2017). On the other hand, the boundary management framework argues that in today's schools,

which become more and more open to their environments, principals should pay considerable

attention to the management of their school boundary. They should have at their disposal strategies

by which they manage the critical boundaries both inside and outside the school (Benoliel, 2107;

Benoliel and Somech, 2018).

These two frameworks might be seen as embodying different perspectives on school

leadership. One might claim that the frameworks of instructional leadership and boundary

management focus their gaze on dissimilar aspects of principalship, which are separated both

conceptually and functionally. From this point of view, enacting instructional leadership and

engagement in boundary activities are two unconnected challenges faced by contemporary

educational leaders. However, the findings of the present study are in line with our main

argument, that these two frameworks have a significant area of overlap. Specifically, the findings

of this study specify quite a few principalship behaviors that serve as instructional leadership

enactment and boundary management simultaneously. It seems that management of instructional

programs and school boundaries may somewhat merge with each other; thus the conceptual

distinction between them is blurred and should be softened.

The findings of the present study are particularly important because the existing literature

has often pointed out that a school principal plays many roles in parallel (Bolman and Deal, 2019;

Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The principal has a multidimensional job, involving many

responsibilities and duties (Murphy et al., 2016; Robbins and Harvey, 2014). According to this

study, however, instructional leadership and boundary management are not two different sets of

tasks. Rather, this study shows that negotiating both internal and external environments, through boundary activities of persuading, empowering, scouting and relating, is done in combination with an intense instructional purpose focused on promoting deep student learning, professional inquiry, and trusting relationships. Therefore, our findings may imply that the two roles of instructional leader and boundary manager do not compete for the principal's attention and do not require a division of the principal's limited time between them, but rather are accomplished in parallel by the same actions.
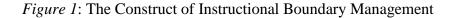
The overlap of instructional leadership and boundary management stems from the fact that instructional leadership is not solely internal and boundary management is not solely external. Our study emphasizes that instructional leaders focus not only on teaching, learning, and assessment activities taking place within the school, but also on importing resources, support, and knowledge needed for improving academic results from outside the school. They explain the school's instructional mission to external stakeholders, create partnerships that help student learning, and search for information about teaching and curriculum outside the boundaries of the school. At the same time, the findings of the current study confirm Author-2's argument (2017, 2018) that boundary management includes not only interactions with individuals, groups, and organizations outside the school, but also many internal activities, which reinforce the school boundary from within. Taking care of the school staff, strengthening teachers' sense of belonging, and protecting them from external excessive demands and a flood of information are essential components of boundary management. Inasmuch as both instructional leadership and boundary management comprise internal and external activities, many behaviors associated with the principal's role reflect instructional leadership and boundary management simultaneously. Moreover, the findings of this study suggest that instructional leadership deals with the questions of *what* and *why*, while
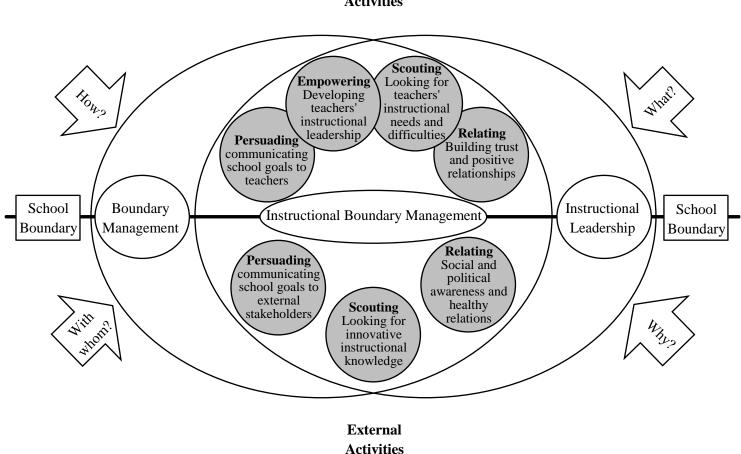
boundary management addresses the questions of *how* and *with whom*. Therefore, this study points to an area of school leadership which is related to these two frameworks together – instructional boundary management, comprising principal behaviors that involve instructional leadership and boundary management simultaneously.

The area of instructional boundary management, identified in this study, is a synthesis of instructional leadership and boundary management, where the two different frameworks are not mutually exclusive, but rather complement each other. Instructional boundary management can be seen as boundary management at the service of instructional leadership, where principals seek to improve teaching and learning through communicative actions, and the school boundary is a consequence of recurrent patterns of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership thus provides the context for boundary management by organizational actors at the level of social interaction. At the same time, instructional boundary management can also be seen as instructional leadership at the service of boundary management, where instructional leadership actions enable the establishment and negotiation of school boundaries, determine relationships within the school and between the school and its environment, and create the levels of differentiation and integration necessary for effective functioning. Supporting each other in improving school academic performance and balancing the tension between internal and external demands, instructional leadership and boundary management may be combined to create the whole of instructional boundary management.

Figure 1 illustrates the construct of instructional boundary management. The two ellipses represent the two frameworks of instructional leadership and boundary management. The arrows on the sides suggest that instructional leadership seeks to answer the questions of *what* and *why*, while boundary management seeks to answer the questions of *how* and *with whom*. The two

ellipses representing the two frameworks are located on both sides of the school boundary, involving both internal and external activities. Significantly, these two ellipses have a large area of overlap, which represents instructional boundary management. This overlap includes the boundary activities of *relating*, *scouting*, *persuading* and *empowering*, which come into play as instructional activities.

Figure 1: The Construct of Instructional Boundary Management

Internal Activities

External Activities

From the perspective of instructional boundary management, positioning principals as gatekeepers in the enactment of instructional leadership is limiting (Salter, 2014). Far more than a

gatekeeper, who determines whether the school will operate by bridging or alternatively by buffering external instructional influences (Kohansal, 2015; Paredes Scribner, 2013), an instructional boundary manager should be seen as a mediating agent seeking collaboration between various internal and external stakeholders with different and even incompatible, goals, desires, views, expectations and demands regarding teaching, learning and achievement (Shaked and Schechter, 2017; Louis and Robinson, 2012). Adopting roles such as linking the school's internal networks with external sources of information, building trust within and around the school, leveraging and maximizing various partnerships, and balancing the tension between inside and outside instructional demands, an instructional boundary manager regulates the schools' organizational boundaries in order to provide high quality teaching and promote the academic achievements of students.

Compared with prior research, this study provides novel data on instructional leadership and boundary activities. However, it has several limitations. First, the data were collected within a particular context, thereby requiring further study to test for cross-cultural validity. Study replication in various sociocultural contexts, in terms such as power distance (the extent to which the lower ranking individuals of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally), individualism (as opposed to collectivism), masculinity (as opposed to femininity), uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation, would be advisable in order to generalize the findings to broader populations and to substantiate their inter-contextual and international validity. Second, as with any self-reporting, the current methodology offered little control over the possibility that respondents may provide socially desirable responses. Further research using techniques such as direct observation could complement principals' self-reporting with more objective data on their instructional leadership practices. Interviewing various stakeholders, both from the extra- and

intra-school worlds, about principals' instructional leadership and boundary activities may also complement principals' self-reporting. Third, future research would do well to explore differences between principals in instructional boundary management. As mentioned above, the current study suggests some gender differences, which should be further explored and verified by using a larger sample and quantitative methods. Other differences (e.g. gender, experience, and education) were not found to be significant, but might be detected in a study using a larger number of participants. Longitudinal studies, including repeated data collection among the same principals at different points in time during their career, would also be useful in revealing development of instructional leadership capacities.

This study holds both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study has identified the area of instructional boundary management as a synthesis of instructional leadership and boundary management. This area of school leadership integrates a deep involvement in improving teaching and learning for all students with monitoring the degree of the school boundary's permeability. Inasmuch as the existing literature has not dealt with the question of how the frameworks of instructional leadership and boundary management may interact, this study expands the available knowledge about the interrelationships between these two frameworks. Practically, principals should try to combine their instructional and boundary roles. Instead of viewing instructional leadership and boundary management as two separate areas, principals should view them as an integrated role of instructional boundary management, handling instructional expectations and boundary issues together. Moreover, it seems advisable to discuss the interplay between instructional leadership and boundary management with prospective and current principals, in various stages of their educational careers, such as preparation programs, mentoring programs provided to beginning principals, and professional development as principals.

It is also a topic that is important to discuss along with a wide spectrum of school stakeholders, such as the school board as the immediate formal authority and employer of both principals and school staff; the parents, either as individuals or in the form of parents' committees as an organized actor; policymakers at the national and regional levels; and the local community.

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