Chapter 3
Distributed Instructional Leadership: The SHARE Model

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Introduction

With the popularity of the effective school movement during the 1980s, school principals came under tremendous pressure to become more 'instructional leaders' (Hallinger and Murphy 1985; Hallinger and Wang 2015). They work in an environment of increased volume and complexity, extended work hours, and often face demands that are in direct conflict with each other (Adams et al. 2021a; Pollock and Wang 2019, 2020; Wang and Pollock 2020) which constantly overwhelm them (Grinshtain and Gibton 2018). Being a 'more instructional leader' adds to the complexity, given the amount of responsibility this brings upon them. School principals, who were already witnessing dramatic changes in their roles from "that of a colleague of teachers to a representative of the school board" (Tyack and Hansot 1982, p. 5), felt that they were not capable of handling this additional "daunting set of expectations" (Noonan and Renihan 2006, p. 9). However, notwithstanding initial resistance, instructional leadership's popularity has grown tremendously during the last three decades. It has become one of the most researched educational leadership models to date and has shown notable staying power (Adams et al. 2021b; Hallinger et al. 2020). The effectiveness of instructional leadership has been extensively studied and the findings have revealed its positive effects on student achievement (Glaés-Coutts 2021).

Bush et al. (2011) include instructional leadership among nine prominent educational leadership models and single it out for its central focus on teaching and learning activities. Similarly, Pont (2020) considers instructional leadership as a crucial driver of reform efforts that leads to enhanced student learning. Emphasizing the role of instructional leadership in sustainable school improvement efforts, Hallinger and

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Murphy (2013) claim that "while effective leadership cannot guarantee successful education reform, research affirms that sustainable school improvement is seldom found without active, skillful, instructional leadership from principals and teachers" (p. 6).

While instructional leadership has been popular for a considerably long period, many researchers claim that there is a significant gap between the claims of instructional leadership practices and the actual practices of school principals (Aas and Brandmo 2016; Adams and Velarde 2021; Shaked 2018). Several reasons could be attributed to this gap (Goldring et al. 2015; Murphy et al. 2016), including time constraints been cited by most educational leaders for not being able to fully implement instructional leadership (Goldring et al. 2015; Wieczorek and Manard 2018). In their traditional role, school leaders would mainly carry out bureaucratic and management tasks which included managing finances, facilities, schedules, and human resources (Hallinger et al. 2018) which has been expanded to being also responsible for improving the academic achievement of students and maintaining a conducive learning environment within the school.

As a result, school leaders around the world are experiencing tremendous workloads, leaving them with little time to focus on teaching and learning activities, leading to stress and anxiety and affecting their wellbeing (Walker 2019). They are also working longer hours, with as much as 55 h of average work during a week (Pollock et al. 2015; Skaalvik 2020). Of their total workload, school principals typically spend their time carrying out tasks such as attending several meetings and briefings, solving problems and conflicts, and other administrative and organizational tasks, with little or no time left for instructional responsibilities (Hauseman 2020).

One of the major requirements of successful instructional leadership practices is the continuous, intense involvement of school principals' indirect attempts to enhance teaching and learning activities in their schools (Hallinger et al. 2020; Neumerski et al. 2018). The effect of instructional leaders on teaching and learning is indirect through their influence on teachers, in the form of their hiring, coaching, developing, and encouraging teachers to constantly improve their instructional practices (Grissom and Condon 2021). Instructional leaders desperately need help and for this, they need to turn to other members of the school community, particularly their teachers. A couple of decades ago, Spillane and Louis (2002, p. 98) made the following assertion "as a practical matter, school principals who cannot engage others in leading will be unable to spread and mobilize the expertise necessary for school improvement in their schools; they are thus unlikely to be very effective".

This chapter highlights the key aspects of an instructional leadership model in schools that is not hierarchical as most traditional instructional leadership models are and is distributed across the institution for greater effectiveness. For instructional leadership to be more distributive, the chapter proposes the SHARE model of distributed instructional leadership that is grounded on empirical evidence from the literature. The chapter first discusses the key propositions of instructional leadership and distributed leadership before delving into the conceptualization of distributed instructional leadership and the SHARE model.

Origins and Evolution of Instructional Leadership

The origins of formal instructional leadership could be traced to the effective schools movement in the 1980s, wherein researchers began classifying schools that were successful as effective schools and the ones that were not successful as ineffective schools (Lezotte n.d.). Out of the many factors that were identified as responsible for school effectiveness, the role of a strong instructional leader was most prominent (Edmonds 1981; Lezotte n.d.; Rosenholtz 1985; Weber 1971). Most studies on effective schools have demonstrated that there exists no effective school that is led by a weak principal (Leithwood et al. 2020; Ylimaki and Brunderman 2022; Zhu et al. 2020).

Instructional leadership has evolved over a period and could be generally conceptualized in two different ways. The earliest conceptualization of instructional leadership was of behaviors of a leader which directly influence the teaching, learning, and staff development within a school (Leithwood 1994), and was primarily focused on direct curricular and instructional activities, especially in small, rural schools (Hallinger 2003). This conceptualization of instructional leadership assumes the principal's role as a 'Master Teacher,' with the principal as an expert in curriculum and instruction (Mitchell and Castle 2005). The second conceptualization is modern and is based upon the premise that school leaders have a significant, indirect impact on the academic achievement of all students in a school (Grissom and Condon 2021). It extends to all leadership activities including creating a conducive school climate, goal setting, scheduling, assessment, and other facets of leadership that has bearing on the academic achievement of students.

Hallinger and Murphy (2013, p. 7) consider it as a process of influence while claiming that "today, we view instructional leadership as an influence process through which leaders identify direction for the school, motivate staff and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teaching and learning". Hallinger and Murphy (1987) believe instructional leadership to be observable practices and behaviors of a leader, particularly those related to school climate and mission while Leithwood's (1994) definition does not include behaviors that are explicitly dedicated to school climate and mission.

While the role of instructional leader in school effectiveness has been well documented and instructional leadership has been studied primarily as the function of a single leader, there is a gradual consensus on its new understanding wherein "instructional leadership, as we reconceptualize it, replaces a hierarchical and procedural notion with a model of 'shared instructional leadership' (Marks and Printy 2003, p. 371)." The findings of a meta-analysis conducted by Robinson et al. (2008) also reinforce this idea, noting that the traditional conceptualization of instructional leadership focuses solely on the principal (Hallinger and Murphy 1985) which is contrary to the findings of several studies wherein most principals were unable to enact instructional leadership by themselves (Hallinger 2003).

It has become clear that "principals cannot lead alone and that school leadership teams are essential to the improvement process" (Chrispeels et al. 2008, p. 730).

Principal's work domain consists of a myriad of traditional school leadership responsibilities (Chan et al. 2019) apart from numerous non-traditional workload that includes, but are not limited to school funding, formal correspondence, problem-solving (Oplatka 2017), meetings, writing reports, managing stakeholders, community participation (Hauseman et al. 2017), improving technology in their schools (Pollock and Hauseman 2019) and dealing with budgetary constraints, and accountability issues (Dwangu and Mahlangu 2021). The sheer volume of workload requires principals to possess and demonstrate a variety of skills such as planning, decision-making, problem-solving, communication, and delegation, among numerous others (Hitt and Tucker 2016). There are suggestions that for instructional leadership to be able to realize its full potential, and even for its sustainability, in the long run, it is important to distribute it among other members of the school (Badenhorst and Radile 2018; Harris and DeFlaminis 2016; Shaked 2018). It is evident that most studies on instructional leadership center around bringing forth the role of the principal in bringing around change, school effectiveness, and improving academic achievement (Sebastian and Allensworth 2012). The important role of other educational leaders, namely teachers and middle leaders in managing the educational achievement of the school is largely ignored.

Distributed Leadership

The idea of instructional leadership has been around for decades and is still among the most popular leadership models (Gumus et al. 2018; Hallinger et al. 2020) for its emphasis on instructional effectiveness. However, instructional leadership, with all its perceived benefits and popularity, is often criticized for being centered around a singular heroic leader, resulting in a 'new wave' of critical leadership conceptualization, encompassing ideas of shared and collective leadership, which focuses more on leadership as a practice rather than as a person (Alvesson and Deetz 2021; Evans 2022). Just like instructional leadership, distributed leadership model has also been widely used riding on its strength of the decentralized leadership concept (Murphy and Brennan 2022).

Scholars have used the concept of shared leadership, collective leadership, team leadership, and distributed leadership interchangeably, among the variety of ways in which practices of collaborative leadership is perceived (Day et al. 2020; Browne-Ferrigno and Björk 2018). Such leadership models have been described in several different ways, such as dispersed, collaborative, democratic, collective, distributed, and co-leadership. Despite significant theoretical disagreements, variations, and ambiguities, shared leadership and distributed leadership have emerged as the two strong conceptual models in response to the top-down leadership constructions (Day et al. 2020; Hickey et al. 2022; Kukenberger and D'Innocenzo 2020). Whether shared or distributed, nonetheless such a leadership upsurges prospects for the educational institutions to profit from the collective capacities of all its team members, allows members to leverage the array of their fortes and advances among institutional

members, and a greater appreciation of collaboration and cooperation (Westberry 2022) as well as a sense of how individual members contribute towards institutional development as a whole.

As a 'post-heroic' leadership model, distributed leadership has gained tremendous popularity. The primary reason for its success could be attributed to its focus on the systemic perspective of leadership rather than on the traits and behaviors or styles of leadership. From the systemic perspective, the responsibilities generally associated with leadership is not associated with a formal leadership role but interspersed across people from all levels of the organization (Brown et al. 2020). This provides more members of the organization with a chance to contribute towards providing input for organizational goals and their achievement. This model perceives leadership as a collaborative process between multiple actors within an organization (Murphy and Brennan 2022). It arises from various forms of social interaction of individuals within the organisation in a way wherein the line between leaders and followers is often blurred. The leadership function is dynamic and individuals that assume a leadership position on one occasion may become followers on another (Tariq 2022). Bennett et al. (2003) conceptualize distributed leadership as:

> Distributed leadership is not something 'done' by an individual 'to' others, or a set of individual actions through which people contribute to a group or organization... [it] is a group activity that works through and within relationships, rather than individual action. (p. 3)

According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2009), distributed leadership could be perceived from a normative perspective, and is concerned more with its implementation mechanics to extract maximum benefit out of it, mostly in terms of enhanced academic achievement of students. In its simplest form, distributed leadership could be perceived as the leadership actions of two or more members of an organization, striving to achieve a common institutional goal. It is often thought, mistakenly, that task distribution is an essential aspect of distributed leadership. There is more to distributed leadership than delegation of task distribution, it is more centered around how leaders, followers, and the situation work together in tandem to lead in a collaborative manner (Murphy and Brennan 2022; Torrance 2013).

Distributed leadership is not a stand-alone method or tactic; it is a vehicle through which to implement leadership actions. While distributed leadership is one of the most prominent leadership models in the field of educational leadership, it is worthwhile to note that it is not the only model to call for collective leadership within an institution. The 'shared leadership' model (Covey et al. 2014), the 'collective leadership' (Bernhardt 2013), and the 'collaborative leadership' model (Kramer and Crespy 2011), are also at the forefront of debunking the concept of 'heroic' leadership to a more collective leadership identity. The central idea of all these models is the claim that leadership is not limited to just one charismatic leader at the helm but is often distributed among the members of an organization.

Scholars have determined that a more distributed structure of leadership within an educational institution provides greater benefits in terms of learning outcomes. The distributed form of leadership appears in most contemporary policy initiatives

for educational leaders around the world (García-Carreño 2021; Liu 2020; Printy and Liu 2021), however, critiques are quick to point out few apparent implementation issues (Bush 2018; Ho and Ng 2017). There is vast literature on distributed leadership from numerous viewpoints making it difficult to discriminate between what is distributed leadership and what is not. Due to the multiple interpretations of the concept, practitioners and scholars often equate it with other forms of shared leadership making it generally an elusive concept that could be construed in several ways (Hickey et al. 2022).

Distributed Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership and distributed leadership remain among the two most widely used leadership constructs based on the wealth of benefits they provide. The emerging conceptualization of distributed instructional leadership builds upon the individual strengths of both these constructs, thus minimizing the weaknesses and providing clarity and strength to educational leadership practices within educational institutions. Badenhorst and Radile (2018) explored the effects of distributed instructional leadership on the educational outcomes of TVET colleges and found positive outcomes. Drawing upon the evidence from distributed cognition, Halverson and Clifford (2013) explored this model as an approach to exploring high school learning environments.

The idea of distributed instructional leadership is still in its infancy and there is hardly any research that explores this phenomenon, particularly in school settings. However, several studies have explored the combined effects of two prominent leadership models, distributed leadership and instructional leadership. For example, Liu et al. (2021) explored the combined effects of instructional leadership and distributed leadership on teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction and found significant effects through the mediating role of supportive school culture and collaboration. Employing the Comprehensive Assessment of Leadership Learning (CALL) survey, Gedik and Bellibas (2015) compared the outcomes of distributed instructional leadership between elementary school and secondary school. They found that the model was equally effective for both schools except for the factor related to the monitoring of teaching and learning. This emphasizes the effectiveness of distributed instructional leadership for both elementary schools and secondary schools.

Recent literature synthesis reveals that distributing instructional leadership in an educational institution constructs an organizational culture that supports effective teaching and learning resulting in improved learning outcomes (Leithwood et al. 2020). Distributed instructional leadership builds, supports, and makes use of the instructional leadership capabilities of other members of the school community (Harris 2012, 2013) without rendering the formal leadership structures in the institution redundant or unnecessary. While to date, no formal definition of distributed instructional leadership exists, it could be conceived as a practice of formal educational leadership within an institution to engage the instructional leadership capacities

and skills of other members of the educational institution for greater instructional. It utilizes the strengths of distributed forms of leadership for sharing instructional leadership tasks (Lee et al. 2012; Vlachadi and Ferla 2013).

Sharing and Distributing Instructional Leadership

One of the biggest criticisms of instructional leadership is its nature of being a heroic leadership model (Fleming et al. 2018; Schweiger et al. 2020). Instructional leaders are supposed to set school vision, mission, and goals, ensure that the school community is aware of these, plan and implement curriculum, monitor classroom instruction, supervise the academic progress of students, supervise staffing, provide motivation to staff and students, plan instructional time, manage resources, develop teachers and staff members as well as several other related activities. There is no surprise then that school leaders are often criticized for not being fully instructional leaders in their schools. Principal leadership is regarded as the second most important influence on student achievement which explains why most attention on school leadership scholarship is focused on the school principals (Liu et al. 2021), disregarding the role of other members of the school community.

Several recent studies, however, provide strong evidence that leadership is more effective when it is shared with other members of the school (Cobanoglu 2021, p. 327), and is more likely to produce positive outcomes if the members of the school community share a common vision, collaborate, show collegiality and work together towards achieving their collective goals (Bickmore and Davenport 2019; Day et al. 2020). Educational leadership today is beset with complexity and ambiguity along with increasing accountability, demands of collaboration, and interdependency calling for immediate adaptive challenges (Dulude and Milley 2021). Divergent expectations and demands of specific and varied skills have made the task of educational leadership beyond the capabilities of one 'heroic' leader, which has led to the idea of leadership that is collaborative, shared, collective or distributive which could provide a solution to many issues. The task of a school leader is expected to become even more complex to meet the demands of the twenty-first century, thus a distributive form of instructional leadership is required to lead the schools successfully.

The 'SHARE' Model of Distributed Instructional Leadership

While it is clear that distributed instructional leadership within an educational institution shows promise, it also raises the issue of its proper implementation. While at the center of instructional leadership is a formal leader (Alvesson and Deetz 2021;

Fig. 3.1 The SHARE model of distributed instructional leadership

Evans 2022), distributed leadership also requires formal leadership structures in place (Harris 2012; 2013). Thus, it is apparent that it becomes the responsibility of formal leadership structures within an educational institution to effectively implement distributed instructional leadership. Unfortunately, to date, there is no formal implementation model for educational leaders to use as a guide.

Therefore, referring to the literature on effective leadership practices, we propose an implementation model that would enhance the strengths of both instructional leadership and distributed leadership and would enable formal leadership structures within an educational institution to successfully implement distributed instructional leadership. The model, called the SHARE model, comprises five essential components—Steward, Harmonize, Abdicate, Reflect and Empower (Fig. 3.1).

Steward

Drawing from literature, Hernandez (2008) defines stewardship as the attitudes and behaviors which put the interests of other members of the institution before the personal objectives and individual's self-interests. Being a steward implies that the ultimate "purpose of one's work is others and not self…that leaders do what they do for something larger than themselves…that their life's work may be the ability

to lead but the final goal of this talent is other directed" (Senge 1990, pp. 345–352). Several scholars have perceived an effective instructional leader as a steward to guide the school community toward common goals (Liang and Sandmann 2015). Educational leaders hold a significant amount of influence over teachers and other members of the school community (Rechsteiner et al. 2022). As a steward, instructional leaders inspire their followers, fostering a sense of individual accountability for the lasting well-being of their educational institution (Bakker et al. 2022). They are influential on account of their vision, beliefs, and veracity, in addition to their capacity to comprehend and relate this vision with that of the other members of the school community (Hallinger et al. 2018). As the chief steward, an instructional leader needs to create a learning community wherein other members of the school community (Lewis et al. 2016; Rechsteiner et al. 2022), such as deputies, middle-level managers, and senior teachers are invited to co-create the vision, and, in turn, become stewards themselves by understanding, developing, and implementing the vision throughout the school. To achieve this, leaders, as stewards need to ensure that individuals within their institutions interact well, collaborate, and cooperate to achieve the organizational goals (Churchill et al. n.d.). As a steward, educational leaders need to hold themselves accountable for all that happens in their institutions although many activities are carried out by other members of the institution.

Harmonize

Leaders' ability to harmonize can best be explained by the example of a musical orchestra. Orchestras are generally directed by a conductor who generally does not play any instruments but directs a sizable instrumental group with so many distinctive and diverse musical instruments. Just like different musical instruments, people in an organization bring with them a variety of skill sets, desires, viewpoints, values, and experiences. When instructional leadership is shared, each member of the team assumes collective responsibility for accomplishing common objectives, and "an emergent property arises... [that allows] the group or collective to accomplish more than an individual could alone" (Chrispeels 2004, p. 5). However, merely sharing leadership responsibilities does not automatically create a shared learning environment (Levine 2011), it requires leaders to be cognizant and continue creating harmony between differential skills, knowledge, and aptitude of people who share leadership to create conducive cultural conditions (DuFour and Marzano 2011). Harmonizing differences between the members in a shared leadership setup positively affects results through the creation of positive relationship structures among members, breaching barriers that impede reciprocal collaboration, and resources which eventually leads to improved instruction and learning outcomes (Ali et al. 2020; Baird and Benson 2022; Nazarpoori 2017). Distributed instructional leadership requires harmonizing a variety of formal and informal roles such as department head, academic supervisors, peer mentors, or teacher trainers (Katzenmeyer and Moller 2009). According to Halverson and Clifford (2013), leaders themselves

operate on two different planes that require harmonization. On one hand, they need to deal with the leading ecosystem which consists of the policies, roles, objectives, budgeting, scheduling, and similar tasks while on the other hand, they create a supporting environment, monitoring strategies, mentoring, coaching, and providing inspiration (Halverson and Clifford 2013).

Abdicate

Leadership is generally considered a position of power in an organization. While distributed leadership is recognized as a model wherein leadership tasks are shared, the question of power finds little attention, if at all, in scholarly discourses and literature. There are few superficial references such as when Harris (2003, p. 75) calls for a 'redistribution of power' or MacBeath et al. (2004, p. 15) describe distribution as 'the essential notion of relinquishing power and ceding control to others'. It is surprising that a vast majority of literature overlooks the central issue of problematizing power and how it is central to any discussion of distributing or sharing leadership (Lumby 2013). The centrality of the position of power is real and cannot be wished away since workers are not disembodied and they function within an intricate composition of power within an institution that hinders and facilitates their capacities to lead (Lumby 2013). For instructional leadership to be distributed in any real sense, first and foremost, the formal leader needs to relinquish the perceived power that comes with the position. The literal meaning of abdication is to completely renounce, however in this context it does not imply that the leaders should step down from their leadership positions but to enable structures within their institutions that promote a shared leadership culture without the perception of a single power center within the organization. It is more of an abdication of power than the position.

Reflect

Reflection in educational pedagogy is a notion denoting an incessant process from an individual standpoint, by reflecting upon critical incidents from one's experiences (Baxter et al. 2021; Msila 2021). Critical reflection is a skill that facilitates leaders to re-examine their own beliefs, behaviors, and actions to have a better understanding of the nature of their work and improve their future actions (Reardon et al. 2019). Like the issue of power is largely absent from leadership discourses, there is a paucity of quality discussions on the role of reflection in effective instructional leadership as well. Reflection is an ability to test ideas and make connections between ostensibly distinct experiences, which is a crucial factor for success. With a team sharing leadership activities in an institution, it becomes an endeavor to create collective insights for learning rather than attempts to fix problems or blame for things that did not go well. Edmondson (2003) claims that reflection is an indispensable element of the

team learning process and that the positional leader's reflective behavior encourages reflective behaviors among the team members as well. When instructional leadership is distributed among the members, each member is encouraged by the positional leader to indulge in reflective practices and bring forth their ideas for discussion. Capacity building is the bedrock of any leadership. Reflection is critical to cooperation and teamwork, as Argyris (1991) claims, "each individual encourages the other to question his reasoning. And in turn, everyone understood the act of questioning not as a sign of mistrust or invasion of privacy but as a valuable opportunity for learning" (p. 108).

Empower

Wassenaar and Pearce (2012, p. 367) pointed out "that empowerment is a critical and necessary component for the development of shared leadership in a group." Successful instructional leaders are no longer merely site-based managers (Hallinger and Lee 2013) but share leadership responsibilities with other members of their institution (Huang et al. 2012). They empower members of their team to take important responsibilities wherein others take on a broad range of instructional leadership tasks and play key roles in reform endeavors within their institutions (Reid et al. 2022). It needs to be reiterated that sharing instructional leadership by empowering others does not remove the presence of a formal, positional leader (Reid et al. 2022), however since distributed leadership depends on responsibilities being shared among team members, the positional leader takes the responsibility of fostering leadership initiatives among team members through empowerment. By empowerment, an instructional leader encourages other members of the team to set goals, accept responsibilities, and work with each other (Munna 2023; Reid et al. 2022) and become self-directing and autonomous, instead of controlling and directing them.

Conclusion

Distributed Instructional leadership is a relatively new conceptualization of educational leadership, emanating from the new wave of leadership that has attracted the attention of researchers recently. It builds and enhances the strengths of the most widely used leadership construct, instructional leadership, by moving away from a person-centered leadership concept to a more distributed form of leadership wherein the formal leadership structure within an educational institution utilizes the instructional leadership capabilities of other members of the institution to amplify the instructional practices and thereby sharing the instructional responsibilities. It utilizes the strengths of distributed forms of leadership for sharing instructional leadership tasks. The SHARE model, as proposed here provides a pathway for the

successful implementation of distributed instructional leadership within an educational institution. The model comprises five essential components, namely, Steward, Harmonize, Abdicate, Reflect and Empower. When effectively used by the formal leadership structures, these components could potentially provide a more effective and distributed form of instructional leadership within any educational institution thereby enhancing the instructional program with better educational outcomes.

The idea of Distributed Instructional leadership is still in its infancy stage and requires extensive conceptual, theoretical, and practical exploration in multiple contexts. There are still definition shortcomings and the efficacy of its implementation is not widely known. Nonetheless, it has great potential, and as more and more researchers and practitioners delve into it, a robust framework will soon emerge together with robust theoretical grounding, and could become an effective educational leadership model for educational institutions.

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