

Assessing the Instructional Management Behavior of Principals by Philip Hallinger and Joseph Murphy (1985)

Part 2 of 3

TABLE 1. Dimensions of Instructional Management		
Defines the Mission	Manages Instructional Program	Promotes School Climate
Framing school goals Communicating school goals	Supervising and evaluating instruction Coordinating curriculum Monitoring student progress	Protecting instructional time Promoting professional development Maintaining high visibility Providing incentives for teachers Enforcing academic standards Providing incentives for students

In this Part 2 of a 3-part review, the focus will be on the Instructional Programme.

According to Hallinger & Murphy

Managing the instructional program

This dimension of instructional management involves working with teachers in areas specifically related to curriculum and instruction. It consists of several related job functions. These are supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress.

Supervising and evaluating instruction.

A central task of the principal is to ensure that school goals are translated into classroom practice. This involves coordinating the classroom objectives of teachers with those of the school, providing instructional support to teachers, and monitoring classroom instruction through numerous informal classroom visits. Feedback to teachers for both supervisory and evaluative purposes is concrete and related to specific instructional practices carried out by the teachers. This function, although currently popular, receives only limited support from research on school effectiveness. There is little evidence that close supervision of instruction results in greater student achievement. This function is included in the framework of this study because it follows the general management model of co-ordination and control, and the district expected principals to engage actively in instructional supervision.

Coordinating curriculum.

A characteristic that stands out in instructionally effective schools is the high degree of curricular coordination. School curricular objectives are closely aligned with both the content taught in classes and with achievement tests. In addition, there appears to be a fairly high degree of continuity in the curriculum across grade levels. This aspect of curricular

coordination is often supported by greater interaction among teachers within and across grade levels on instructional and curricular issues.

Monitoring student progress.

Instructionally effective schools emphasize both standardized and criterion-referenced testing. Tests are used to diagnose programmatic and student weaknesses, to evaluate the results of changes in the school's instructional program, and to make classroom assignments. Principals play a key role in this area in several ways. They provide teachers with test results in a timely and useful fashion, discuss test results with the staff as a whole and with grade-level staff and individual teachers, and provide interpretive analyses that describe the test data in a concise form for teachers. They use test results for setting goals, assessing the curriculum, evaluating instruction, and measuring progress toward school goals.

Did you find that interesting or even perturbing that “There is little evidence that close supervision of instruction results in greater student achievement”? I think much depends on the quality of that supervision. If we have some framework that inevitably breaks down into a few fixed steps, teachers may simply just go through the motions. “Jumping through hoops” is how this phenomenon is described. So the important thing in supervision is, as always, a shared understanding and avoiding an over-reliance on fixed templates.

I believe we keep improving our coordination of curriculum, greatly helped by PRISM in secondary schools and JCs. I notice many HODs have tried to see their subject as one smooth flow from lower to upper levels, bringing together teachers of that subject from both ends to understand each other’s perspective. We in Singapore are sometimes suspected of ‘teaching to the test’. But while our teachers should not limit their teaching merely to what comes out in the exam, it is still critical that **“School curricular objectives are closely aligned with both the content taught in classes and with achievement tests.”**

Monitoring student progress especially through test results has been, for me, a particularly effective way of communicating school purpose while at the same time showing the value placed on curricular instruction. One could go one step further and interpret the results for the students. I was constantly surprised how much students did not understand the meaning of the results they got. For them it was only a matter of “Did I pass or did I fail?” I would work with them on what it meant for the next stage, whether that was the next class level or the next stage of education. It did appear to clarify for them what they were doing, and that they were not doing it purely to stop being nagged at.