



INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AT HIGH-PERFORMING VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS: ADMINISTRATORS' VS TEACHERS' PERCEPTION

Dita Puruwita¹⁺

Leele Susana
Jamian²

Norazah Abdul
Aziz³

¹Faculty of Economics, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia.

²Email: dita_puruwita@unj.ac.id Tel: +6281299393034

^{2a}Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.

³Email: leele@uitm.edu.my Tel: +60192187514

³Email: norazahaa@uitm.edu.my Tel: +60136308008



(+ Corresponding author)

ABSTRACT

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Instructional leadership continues to be a prevalent subject in educational leadership and has been progressively implemented to solidify educational leadership practices globally. The duty of school leaders as instructional leaders has long been recognized as an essential factor in school organizations to improve the quality of learning in schools. This study aimed to explore and report the instructional leadership practices among school administrators (principals, and vice-principals, head of programs) from high-performing vocational schools based on administrators' and teachers' perspectives. A survey was used to acquire the quantitative data. The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was employed and administered to 155 school administrators and 336 teachers from twenty-three high-performing vocational schools. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure the level of instructional leadership practices. The t-test was utilized to assess the substantial differences between school administrators and teachers. The findings indicated that the school administrators' instructional leadership practices are high in defining school goals, managing instructional Programme, and promoting positive school climate dimensions. The findings also show a substantial difference in scores between the perceptions of school administrators and teachers concerning instructional leadership practices by school administrators. This study contributes to the understanding of instructional leadership practices, which had previously received limited attention.

Contribution/Originality: This study explores and reports the instructional leadership practices among school administrators from high-performing vocational schools based on administrators' and teachers' perspectives. This study contributes in understanding of instructional leadership practices in high-performing vocational schools based on administrators' and teachers' perspectives, hitherto not done at this level.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many researchers and policymakers have been interested in educational leadership since the beginning of the 21st century. The relevance of instructional leadership as a determinant leading to school effectiveness has been highlighted by research for the past three decades. The duty of school leaders as instructional leaders has long been recognised as an essential factor in school organisations, especially related to their responsibility to enhance the quality of learning in schools (Logho, 2016; Uddin, 2020). The topic has received a great deal of attention in the last three decades. Researchers asserted that school administrators must possess strong instructional leadership expertise and skills to meet the needs of the 21st century (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Hallinger, 2011). Therefore,

most school leaders today strive to balance their roles as manager-administrator and instructional leaders. Resultantly, the duties of school administrators have shifted drastically.

School leaders used to be primarily responsible for maintaining children's safety, monitoring schedules, and implementing school policies. Today's school leaders are anticipated to function as instructional leaders, supporting effective teaching and learning techniques to help students succeed academically. Although school leaders are involved in various responsibilities that tend to divert their attention from this critical responsibility, competent school leaders emphasise instruction because they acknowledge that being instructional will greatly influence students (Brolund, 2016; Heck & Hallinger, 2014). Hence, existing studies on school leadership suggest that school leaders are expected to serve as instructional leaders.

Literature related to effective schools has shown that efficient school leaders are those who have spent a considerable percentage of their time participating in educational activities in schools. Numerous countries continually require school leaders to become instructional leaders (Bellibas, 2014). The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) of Indonesia recognised the critical nature of instructional leadership by requiring school principals to undertake the role of an instructional leader instead of an operational leader (Directorate General of Teachers and Education Personnel, 2020). In Indonesia, instructional leadership is regarded as one of the most successful leadership approaches for achieving academic success. Thus, instructional leadership is currently one of the topics included in training for prospective school administrators since 2011 (Achmad, 2019).

By considering the significance of instructional leadership, understanding the administrators' instructional leadership practices is necessary, particularly in the school setting in Indonesia. Nonetheless, despite significant evidence on instructional leadership, the knowledge base in some nations is still developing. The evidence on leadership and leadership practises, including instructional leadership, is notably uneven and comparatively underdeveloped in Asia (Hallinger, Adams, Harris, & Jones, 2018; Harris, Jones, Adams, & Cheah, 2019; Townsend, 2019). Empirical evidence from specific countries and circumstances remains scarce while the international knowledge base on instructional leadership continues to develop and expand. Hence, more literature is needed to create more awareness about instructional leadership practises in Asia, including Indonesia.

Moreover, additional empirical studies on the practice of instructional leadership in Asia are critically necessary to solidify the research framework on instructional leadership within Asia (Harris et al., 2019; Townsend, 2019; Walker & Hallinger, 2015) particularly in the Indonesian school setting. However, there is a dearth of studies on the instructional leadership practices in Asia, and a need is felt to explore the instructional leadership practices of school administrators working in high-performing vocational schools in Jakarta, Indonesia, based on the administrators' and teachers' perceptions, which have been rarely explored. Consequently, the lack of exploration on instructional leadership practices is one of the numerous gaps that require further investigation to improve leadership practices and meet the demands of 21st-century education.

1.1. Problem Statement

Indonesia is a country that faces challenges of low education quality. A survey conducted by Political and Economic Risk Consultants (PERC) revealed that Indonesia ranks 12th out of 12 Asian nations in terms of educational quality. In addition, according to data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Indonesian students' average achievement score is the lowest among Southeast Asian countries, especially in science, mathematics, and reading subjects (OECD, 2019).

This research addresses the issues of school administrators hardly practising instructional leadership (Noor, Herlinawati, & Sofyaningrum, 2020). Although research points out the importance of administrators' instructional leadership practices, studies have reported that school administrators devoted relatively little time to instructional leadership activities (Goldring et al., 2019; Okey, 2020). Goldring et al. (2019) also found that school leaders spend less than one-fifth of each school day on instructional matters. Cuban explained that school leaders have a DNA

that drives them to undertake managerial and political responsibilities rather than instructional responsibilities (Hallinger, Leithwood, & Heck, 2010). Hence, this study is hoped to provide insight into the instructional leadership practices at high-performing vocational schools in Indonesia.

School administrators' instructional leadership practices in Indonesia have been unexplored until recently (Lumban, 2021; Pereira, 2016; Walker & Hallinger, 2015). This research gap drives the objective of this study, which aims to explore the instructional leadership practices used by school administrators as they govern their schools, making their schools high-performing schools. Shortcomings in instructional leadership research have been observed, particularly in Indonesia, where most of the existing research focuses on descriptive analysis from either the teachers' or administrators' perspective. In other words, the researchers aimed to explore whether the administrators and teachers agreed on how frequently the administrators practice their role as instructional leaders. Thus, a need exists to examine instructional leadership practices in both views.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The study's purpose was to examine instructional leadership practices by administrators at high-performing vocational schools based on the perceptions of teachers and administrators. Thus, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the school administrators' perception of their instructional leadership practices at high-performing vocational schools?
2. What is the teachers' perception of school administrators' instructional leadership practices at high-performing vocational schools?
3. Are there any significant differences between administrators' and teachers' perceptions of administrators' instructional leadership practices regarding school administrators' instructional leadership practices?

This research adds to the body of knowledge on school administrators' instructional leadership techniques in the settings of high-performing Indonesian vocational schools. The study also presents significant findings that contribute to advancing the research area in Asia, particularly in Indonesia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Instructional Leadership Practices

The concept of instructional leadership arose in the early 1980s and focused on how leadership improved educational performance. In the United States of America, instructional leadership emerged in the 1950s. Bridges established the groundwork for instructional leadership in 1967. Edmond noted in his study in 1979 that emerging school leaders tend to be instructional leaders (Hallinger, Wang, Chen, & Li, 2015). Nevertheless, the role of an instructional leader was rarely recognised as school leaders were primarily responsible for matters such as budget, facilities, schedule, and staff (Nguyễn, Hallinger, & Chen, 2018).

Alternative and competing conceptualisations of instructional leadership did not emerge in scholarly works until the 1980s (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). In the mid-1980s, school administrators began to focus on instructional leadership (Hallinger et al., 2015). Nevertheless, since the 1990s, educational systems worldwide have gradually recognised instructional leadership as one of the administrators' main roles (Bush, 2013). Thus, studies started to concentrate on instructional leadership practises at the time (Gurley, Anast-May, O'Neal, & Dozier, 2016; Zahed-Babelan, Koulaei, Moeinikia, & Sharif, 2019).

Past studies have revealed that the investigation of instructional leadership dominated educational research during the 1980s due to the intense focus on the emergence of an effective school movement. Besides, instructional leadership practices have been employed to enhance the skills of educational leaders across the globe (Hallinger et al., 2015). Nonetheless, Toprak (2020) confirmed that as other leadership models emerged in the 1990s, interest in

instructional leadership practises waned. Fortunately, in recent decades, the emphasis on educational leadership has shifted to instructional leadership (Kwan, 2019).

The instructional leadership study has yielded several definitions and models during the last 30 years. Sun and Leithwood (2015) investigated the notion that there is no comprehensive understanding of the diverse range of leadership techniques associated with instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is now generally regarded by practitioners and policymakers as an integral component of school management practice. Indeed, contemporary study evaluations broadly substantiate early findings on the link between student learning and instructional leadership. Hence, in contrast to early forecasts, instructional leadership has proven to be an enduring idea that guides both practises in the educational leadership and management fields (Hallinger et al., 2015; Zahed-Babelan et al., 2019).

All leadership activities that have an indirect impact on student learning, such as school culture and timetabling procedures, are defined as instructional leadership (Ng, Nguyen, Wong, & Choy, 2015). Lim and Singh (2020) explained instructional leadership as every act of school principals' planning to influence and guide teachers to improve their teaching quality and motivate students to accomplish learning outcomes. On the other hand, according to Hallinger (2003) instructional leadership is described as directly relevant acts to teaching and learning, including conducting classroom observations. This conceptualisation recognises that principals, as instructional leaders, have a beneficial influence on students' learning (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002). In essence, instructional leaders lead their organisations through a learning-centred approach.

Numerous significant models of instructional leadership have been presented throughout the years. One of the earliest models was developed by Hallinger, one of the foremost scholars in this field. Hallinger's model, the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), is the instructional leadership model most frequently utilised in empirical investigations (Hallinger et al., 2015). The model suggests three dimensions for the principal's instructional leadership role: defining the school goals, managing the instructional programme, and promoting a positive school climate. The three dimensions are subdivided into ten practises: framing clear school goals, communicating clear school goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, providing incentives for teachers, providing incentives for learning, promoting professional development, and maintaining high visibility (Hallinger et al., 2015).

2.1.1. Defining the School Goals

School leaders have no other options except to get involved and build the school's mission and vision. School governance policy specifies who is responsible for initiating, developing, and leading the staff and community for creating, revising, and reviewing the school mission (Phillip Hallinger, Wang, & Chen, 2013). School leaders must define the school mission, which should include the entire school community, so that "there is a shared purpose". When widely communicated, the school's missions and goals serve as a foundation for decision-making and lend meaning to teachers' involvement in school improvement (Hallinger, 2018).

2.1.2. Managing the Instructional Programme

This dimension necessitates leaders being immersed in the school's teaching programme (Hallinger et al., 2010). This leadership function focuses on school leaders' roles in delivering excellent education, producing quality teaching and learning, assessing student progress, and changing to support success. The emphasis in this second dimension is on using feedback to improve teachers' teaching skills. Therefore, principals and middle-level leaders have an equal responsibility to provide effective feedback to teachers (Hallinger, 2018; Hallinger et al., 2015).

2.1.3. Promoting Positive School Climate

In order to create a positive school climate, schools should aim to create a learning community for all. Everyone should care about and respect each other and believe in their capability to attain ambitious goals. Positive attitudes help to build and maintain a positive culture. School leaders may help to create a healthy, collaborative school culture. Instilling collective leadership and conveying a common vision can assist school leaders in creating a healthy and collaborative school culture (Hallinger, 2018; Hallinger et al., 2015).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

A quantitative approach using a survey research design was applied for this study. A survey design provides a quantitative description of a population's trends, attitudes, and viewpoints or examines for links between variables in a population by analysing a population sample (Creswell & David, 2018). Two sets of instruments were utilised to gather data from two groups of respondents, namely school administrators (head of programmes, principals, and vice-principals) and teachers from 23 high-performing vocational schools in Jakarta, Indonesia.

A high-performing school is referred to "sekolah rujukan," or "sekolah unggul" in Bahasa Indonesia. A high-performing vocational school has superior performance, excellent access, and effective management (MoEC, 2016). The investigated schools are vocational high schools under the Education Service Office (Dinas Pendidikan) of Jakarta, Indonesia. Hence, these schools are under the supervision of the MoEC of the Republic of Indonesia. The main objective of the MoEC is to transform all the high-performing vocational schools into a model school that can serve as an example for other vocational high schools.

Thus, a total of 175 school administrators and 378 teachers from high-performing vocational schools were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling to answer the questionnaires. From the 553 questionnaires administered to administrators and teachers, the response rate was 88.8% (n = 491 respondents, comprising 155 administrators and 336 teachers). A consent form was read and signed by all the participants. They were assured that they could withdraw from the research at any point.

The questionnaire instrument to measure instructional leadership practices to gather the quantitative data to suit schools' settings in Indonesia were adapted and modified from Hallinger. After adapting the instrument, the researchers first assessed the items to ensure they were appropriate for the study context. Next, the instrument was reviewed by five experts in educational management and leadership in Malaysia and Indonesia. Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 was used to analyse the collected data.

For answering research questions 1 and 2, descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation were generated. In this study, the mean score interpretation table created by Ahmad Mukhtar and Yuen Fook (2020) was utilised to calculate the mean score for the respondents' responses. The t-test was utilised to assess the substantial differences between school administrators and teachers. The t-test, an inferential statistic, was used to compare the mean scores of the two separate groups and conclude about the statistical significance of the figures among the populations (Pallant, 2016).

4. RESULT

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondent groups.

The table shows that 155 administrators participated in the study, where 81 (52.3%) were male, and 74 (47.7%) were female. However, most administrators (111) stated that they were in their first five years as an administrator. Half of the administrators (51%) were above 51 years old, with the youngest group of administrators (aged 21 to 25) accounting for the minor proportion of administrators (0.6%). Among the teachers, 27.7% of the respondents (93 teachers) were above 51, with only 6.5% aged 21 to 25.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Administrators		Teachers	
Gender				
Male	81	52.3	119	35.4
Female	74	47.7	217	64.6
Total	155	100.0	336	100.0
Age				
21-25 years old	1	.6	22	6.5
26-30 years old	4	2.6	62	18.5
31-35 years old	3	1.9	39	11.6
36-40 years old	9	5.8	36	10.7
41-45 years old	24	15.5	46	13.7
46-50 years old	35	22.6	38	11.3
Above 51 years old	79	51.0	93	27.7
Total	155	100.0	336	100.0
Highest Academic Qualification				
Degree	93	60.0	278	82.7
Master	61	39.4	57	17.0
Doctor	1	0.6	1	0.3
Total	155	100.0	336	100.0
Experience in Current Position				
0-5 years	111	71.6	91	27.1
6-10 years	22	14.2	43	12.8
11-15 years	5	3.2	32	9.5
16-20 years	7	4.5	51	15.2
20-25 years	5	3.2	44	13.1
Above 25 years	5	3.2	75	22.3
Total	155	100.0	336	100.0

In terms of the highest academic qualification, from 155 administrators surveyed, 60% ($n = 93$) had a bachelor's degree, and only 0.6% (one administrator) held a doctors' degree. Regarding the academic background of teachers, 87% (278 teachers) had a bachelor's degree, and 0.3% (one teacher) had a doctors' degree. Among the teachers, 22.3% reported having over 25 years of classroom teaching experience, compared to only 3.2% of school administrators. In this case, most administrators have less tenure because the administrators have to work as teachers for a certain period before becoming an administrator.

4.1. Research Questions

4.1.1. What is the School Administrators' Perception of their Instructional Leadership Practices at High-Performing Vocational Schools?

Since the study aimed to determine the administrators' perception of their instructional leadership practices, a descriptive analysis of administrators' responses was undertaken. The extent of the practices in providing instruction is presented in Figure 1. The overall mean score for the three instructional leadership dimensions based on the school administrators' perception is high ($M = 5.90$, $SD = 0.58$). For the individual dimension of instructional leadership, promoting a positive school climate has the lowest mean score ($M = 5.80$, $SD = 0.64$). Nevertheless, defining school goals has the highest mean score ($M = 6.28$, $SD = 0.63$), while managing the instructional programme has a mean score ($M = 5.91$, $SD = 0.70$), almost the same as the overall mean score.

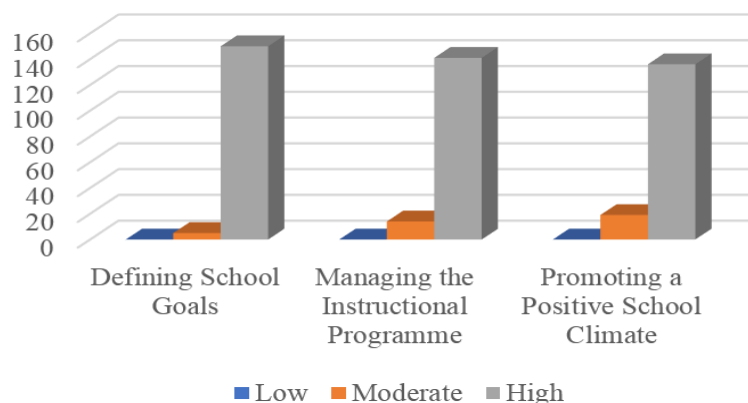


Figure 1. The mean level of the three dimensions based on school administrators' perception.

4.1.2. What is the Teachers' Perception of School Administrators' Instructional Leadership Practices at High-Performing Vocational Schools?

The teachers' perception of high-performing vocational schools is based on the overall available data. In Indonesia, the teachers perceived their administrators' instructional leadership practices in all three dimensions at a high level. In Figure 2, the score of the overall dimensions of instructional leadership based on teachers' perception is high (M = 5.54, SD = 0.75). The administrators' dimension of defining school goals had the highest mean score (M = 5.86, SD = 0.85). The second highest mean score from the teachers' perception was the dimension of managing the instructional programme (M = 5.55, SD = 0.86). The least mean score from the three dimensions as per the teachers' perception was the dimension of promoting a positive school climate (M = 5.40, SD = 0.83).

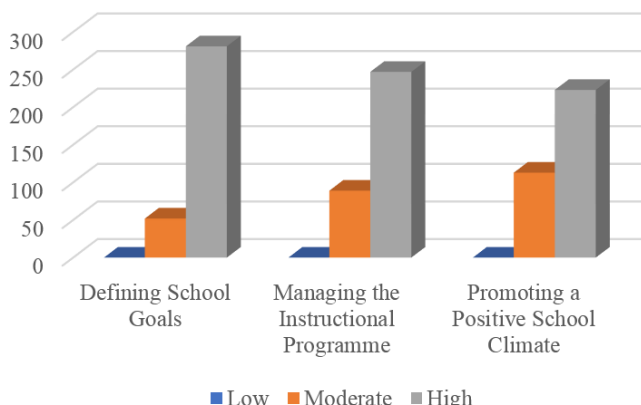


Figure 2. The mean level of the three dimensions based on teachers' perception.

4.1.3. Are There Any Significant Differences Between the Perceptions of Administrators and Teachers on Administrators' Instructional Leadership Practices Regarding School Administrators' Instructional Leadership Practices?

An independent t-test was utilised to identify the significant difference between the two groups to address this research question. This analysis was conducted with an alpha level of 0.05. Table 2 shows that the means for all the three dimensions for both sample groups statistically differ since the value in the Sig.(2-tailed) column is less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference between both groups. The finding revealed that the administrators clearly perceive themselves to be more engaged in their instructional leadership practices compared to the teachers.

5. DISCUSSION

The results above show that the administrators' perceptions of their instructional leadership practices in defining the school mission are high, with the highest mean score among the three instructional leadership dimensions, namely defining school goals, managing instructional programme, and promoting positive school

climate. In addition, the administrators' responses showed that the dimensions related to developing a positive school learning climate have the lowest scores among all dimensions. On the other hand, managing the instructional programme has a score almost similar to the overall mean score. Hence, the findings indicate that the administrators judge that they could demonstrate their role as instructional leaders in all three dimensions.

In addition, the findings also indicate that teachers have similar levels of perception about the practice of administrators as learning leaders. The teachers found that the administrators participated in various instructional leadership activities. The findings above show that administrators better define the school's mission than other instructional leadership dimensions because the average score is higher than the overall average score. The teachers' perceptions of the dimensions associated with developing a positive school learning climate imply that more actions must be undertaken in this regard, as the average score is lower than the overall mean score.

The administrators' perception shows that defining the school goals, which has the highest score, shows the most dominant practice carried out by administrators. The teachers also feel that this dimension is prevalent among the administrators' instructional leadership practice. Hence, the administrators have set clear school goals and communicated them to the entire school community.

The findings are consistent with Gurley et al. (2016); Hallinger, Walker, Nguyen, Truong, and Nguyen (2017); Bada, Ariffin, and Nordin (2020); Fred and Singh (2021) and Lingam, Lingam, and Singh (2021). They found that school leaders defined the school goals dimension at a high level. The quantitative data supported this finding. On the other hand, promoting a positive school climate was the least practised among the administrators' instructional leadership dimensions based on administrators' perspectives. The teachers also perceived that promoting a positive school climate was the lowest of the three dimensions. The findings parallel prior studies by Gurley et al. (2016) and Fred and Singh (2021).

On the whole, the results revealed that school administrators have constantly practised all the dimensions of instructional leadership at a high level. These findings are consistent with the findings reported in a quantitative study of instructional leadership in Malaysia (Sim, 2011). According to the findings, Malaysian leaders effectively implemented the instructional leadership dimensions. In contrast, the result does not align with Khilmiyah, Wiyono, and Suud (2020) whose findings indicated that the school leaders in Indonesia do not exercise active instructional leadership.

However, the literature showed instructional leadership as an element differentiating between low-performing and high-performing schools (Khan, Asimiran, Kadir, & Basri, 2020; Sufean, 2014). According to empirical study findings, the most effective schools are distinguished by the school leader's focus on instructional practises besides the numerous other obligations demanded of an administrator on a daily basis (Magnusson, 2020). In addition, school administrators' instructional leadership practices are thought to be very important in making schools learning organisations and effective schools (Lim & Singh, 2020). Therefore, these findings prove that instructional leadership demonstrated by administrators' leaders is critical in developing high-performing schools.

Table 2. Independent samples t-test.

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Defining School Goals	Equal variances assumed	24.567	0.000	5.438	489	0.000	0.41542	0.07639	0.26532	0.56552
	Equal variances not assumed			6.058	393.775	0.000	0.41542	0.06857	0.28060	0.55023
Managing Instructional Programme	Equal variances assumed	12.382	0.000	4.553	489	0.000	0.35999	0.07906	0.20465	0.51532
	Equal variances not assumed			4.905	361.611	0.000	0.35999	0.07340	0.21565	0.50432
Promoting Positive School Climate	Equal variances assumed	13.213	0.000	5.056	489	0.000	0.38220	0.07559	0.23367	0.53073
	Equal variances not assumed			5.557	380.645	0.000	0.38220	0.06878	0.24696	0.51744

Furthermore, on average, school administrators rated the frequency of their instructional leadership practises at about the same level, as teachers' report observing administrators perform these practices when examining the mean scores for the three dimensions of instructional leadership. This finding is exciting. Nevertheless, administrators' self-report scores were consistently higher than teachers' ratings in all dimensions. Administrators rated themselves higher than teachers on all scales, which is a tendency observed in prior literature. In previous research, the perceptions of teachers and administrators of instructional leadership were significantly different. Administrators' perceptions of instructional leadership are higher than teachers' perceptions in every sub-dimension of instructional leadership (Hallinger et al., 2015; Hallinger et al., 2018; Zorlu & Arseven, 2016).

According to the findings, the independent t-test indicates a significant difference in score between how administrators perceive themselves as displaying these specific instructional leadership behaviours and how teachers perceive administrators' behaviours in general. Resultantly, the findings revealed statistically significant disparities in the three dimensions between administrators and teachers.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to determine how administrators and teachers perceive administrators' instructional leadership in Indonesia and whether differences exist in their perceptions. The findings revealed that administrators' and teachers' perceptions of administrators' instructional leadership are high. In particular, the results showed that defining the school goals has the highest rating among the three dimensions of instructional leadership. Hence, the findings imply that administrators performed excellently in defining the school mission. Nevertheless, the instructional leadership dimension related to promoting a positive school learning climate was the lowest among the three dimensions. In addition, this study concludes that the administrators emphasise practising instructional leadership at high-performing vocational schools in Indonesia.

Additional findings demonstrate a substantial difference in the perceptions of administrators and teachers of instructional leadership dimensions. This result implies that teachers and administrators perceive the administrators' instructional leadership differently. This study contributed new information to the body of knowledge on administrators' instructional leadership practises in Indonesia's high-performing vocational schools that have not been thoroughly researched. This study also assists policymakers in developing policies designed to improve instructional leadership in Indonesia. In future research, alternative data collection, such as a qualitative study, should be considered to complement quantitative data in examining instructional leadership practices.

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