



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

UNDERSTANDING HOW INSTRUCTIONAL  
SUPERVISORS PROMOTE TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING IN THE LEBANESE CONTEXT: A MULTIPLE-  
CASE STUDY OF TWO PRIVATE SCHOOLS

by  
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A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
to the Department of Education  
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
at the American University of Beirut

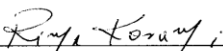
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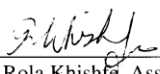
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Dr. Rima Karami Akkary, whose expertise, understanding, and patience considerably enhanced my graduate experience.

I am grateful for the assistance of the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Saouma BouJaoude and Dr. Rola Khishfe. I truly appreciate their insights and the time they have dedicated to offer me thorough and valuable feedback.

I would also like to thank Ms. Hadeel Dbaibo for her time and patience in helping me edit and organize my thesis.

Finally, I am grateful for the support and encouragement of my parents and dear husband. I appreciate my dear family members and friends for their words of encouragement.

# AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Hala Badih El-Murr for Master of Arts

Major: Educational Administration and Policy Studies

Title: Understanding How Instructional Supervisors Promote Teachers' Professional Learning in the Lebanese Context: A Multiple-Case Study of Two Private Schools

The purpose of this study was to understand how instructional supervisors promote teachers' professional learning in two private schools in a new context- Lebanon. The study aimed to: explore and identify instructional supervisory roles and practices as well as other school factors that promote or hinder teachers' professional learning; and provide recommendations for, practitioners and policy makers in order to improve instructional supervisory practices so as to enhance teachers' professional learning experiences. The study is grounded in a phenomenological qualitative research tradition, which explored instructional supervisors' and teachers' perspectives on instructional supervisory roles and school factors which promote or hinder teachers' professional learning experience. The study was conducted in two large private K-12 schools where participants were selected from the elementary divisions. The participants included: 6 instructional supervisors- coordinators and heads of departments; and 25 elementary teachers- of this total, 12 teachers participated in individual interviews, and a different set of 13 teachers participated in focus group interviews. Triangulation was achieved through the collection of documents and records, and the focus group interviews served as a member check to further enhance internal validity. The results showed considerable similarities between participants' perspectives and the international literature with respect to supervisory roles that promote teachers' professional learning, as well as participants' mindfulness of factors that hinder teachers' professional learning. The results also indicated two discrepancies whereby participants failed to reference two factors frequently mentioned in the international literature as essential to promoting teachers' professional learning: the creation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC); as well as the adequate training of administrators and instructional supervisors. Also an interpretation of teachers' statements and perspectives demonstrates: that teachers wished for more direct assistance from instructional supervisors; and that teachers resorted to self-directed learning practices as they had the most control over this aspect of their professional learning. To analyze the results, the data collected was compared with-in case, across case, and then with the international literature. Recommendations for future research and practice were then suggested.

# CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	xv
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
A. Rationale.....	5
B. Purpose of the Study.....	8
C. Significance.....	9
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
A. Background.....	12
B. Defining Instructional Leadership.....	17
1. Collaboration.....	21
2. Challenges Applying Instructional Leadership.....	22
C. Research Studies on Instructional Leadership: Instructional Leadership and Student Achievement.....	23
1. Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal.....	26
D. Effective Instructional Supervision Practices in Promoting Professional Learning.....	28
E. Instructional Supervision and Professional Learning.....	36
1. Staff Development and Supervision.....	36
2. Practical Strategies for Professional Development.....	40

F. Professional Learning and Professional Development.....	44
1. Background: from Professional Development to Professional Learning.....	44
2. Professional Learning Models and Trends.....	51
a. Models of effective professional development.....	54
3. Adult Learning Theories.....	58
4. Conditions Promoting Teachers’ Professional Learning.....	67
a. Restructuring teacher training.....	68
b. Changing the conditions under which teachers work.....	69
c. Providing continuous professional development.....	73
5. Conclusion.....	77
<b>III. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>79</b>
A. Research Design.....	79
1. Definition of terms.....	79
B. Case Study Design.....	81
C. Participant Selection.....	83
D. Data Collection Tools.....	86
1. Focus Group and Individual Interviews.....	87
2. Methods of Data Collection.....	88
E. Data Analysis.....	90
F. Credibility of the Study.....	92
<b>IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>94</b>
A. Instructional Supervisors’ Role in Promoting Teachers’ Professional Learning.....	95
1. Being a Liaison.....	97
a. Communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers .....	98
i. Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.....	99
ii. Teachers’ perspectives.....	99



b.	Communicating teachers' needs and experiences from teachers to instructional supervisors.....	102
i.	Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	102
ii.	Teachers' perspectives.....	103
2.	Fostering Trust.....	105
a.	Encouraging and acknowledging teachers' professional learning gains.....	106
i.	Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	106
ii.	Teachers' perspectives.....	108
b.	Adjusting supervision style based on teachers' personal and professional needs.....	110
i.	Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	111
ii.	Teachers' perspectives.....	113
c.	Being a leader/role model for teachers.....	115
i.	Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	116
ii.	Teachers' perspectives.....	117
d.	Being available to teachers and listening to their concerns.....	120
i.	Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	121
ii.	Teachers' perspective.....	122
3.	Encouraging Participation in Decision-Making.....	124
a.	Consulting with teachers.....	125
i.	Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	125
ii.	Teachers' perspectives.....	127
b.	Sharing in decision-making.....	129
i.	Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	129
ii.	Teachers' perspectives.....	131
4.	Supporting Teachers' Instructional Practices.....	132
a.	Helping teachers manage their instructional time to focus on instructional work.....	134
i.	Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	134
ii.	Teachers' perspectives.....	136
b.	Guiding teachers through regular follow-up.....	137
i.	Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	137
ii.	Teachers' perspectives.....	139
c.	Providing teachers with resources and other instructional materials .....	141
i.	Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	141
ii.	Teachers' perspectives.....	142
5.	Evaluating Instructional Practices.....	144
a.	Monitoring and observing teachers' instructional practices.....	145
i.	Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	145

ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	147
b. Communicating instructional feedback to teachers.....	150
i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	150
ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	151
c. Assessing teachers' professional learning needs.....	152
i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	152
ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	154
 B. Factors that Affect Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning.....	 157
1. The Design of Professional Learning Activities.....	157
a. Workshops and presentations.....	159
i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	160
ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	161
b. Self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology.....	163
i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	163
ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	164
c. Guided, job-embedded professional learning related to instructional challenges and advances in students' learning.....	166
i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	166
ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	168
d. Professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection on practice.....	170
i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	170
ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	172
e. Continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction.....	174
i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	174
ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	176
2. Teacher Characteristics.....	178
a. Level of ability, knowledge and skills.....	179
i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	180
ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	182
b. Being creative with instructional practices.....	182
i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	183
ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	184
c. Commitment to professional learning and the school.....	184
i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	185
ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	186
d. Being motivated and sustaining motivation.....	187
i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	187

	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	188
e.	Being organized and completing and submitting work in a timely fashion.....	190
	i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	190
	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	191
f.	Possessing adequate communication skills.....	192
	i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	192
	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	193
g.	Being attentive and open to seeking help from peers and instructional supervisors.....	194
	i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	195
	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	196
h.	Being a hard worker and possessing a passion for teaching.....	197
	i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	197
	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	198
i.	Adjusting to change in instructional practices.....	199
	i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	200
	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	201
3.	School Conditions and Context.....	202
a.	Availability of up-to-date resources and technology to support teachers' practice.....	203
	i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	204
	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	206
b.	Well trained administrators and instructional supervisors.....	208
	i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	208
	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	209
c.	Sufficient resource allocation for frequent professional learning.....	209
	i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	210
	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	211
d.	Relevance and differentiation of professional learning experience to teachers' needs.....	215
	i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	215
	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	217
e.	Availability of time.....	220
	i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	220
	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	222
f.	Work pressure draining teachers' ability to reflect on their learning.....	223
	i. Instructional supervisors' perspectives.....	224
	ii. Teachers' perspectives.....	225

g. Level of collegial support.....	227
i. Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.....	227
ii. Teachers’ perspectives.....	228
h. Availability of teacher rewards and incentives.....	229
i. Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.....	229
ii. Teachers’ perspectives.....	230

V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... 232

A. Discussion..... 232

1. Comparative Analysis of Teachers’ and Instructional Supervisors’ Perspectives on the Instructional Supervisor Role in Promoting Professional Learning..... 233

a. Areas of similarities..... 234

i. Communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers..... 234

ii. Being a leader/role model for teachers..... 234

iii. Guiding teachers through regular follow-up..... 235

b. Areas of differences..... 235

i. Encouraging and acknowledging teachers’ professional learning gains..... 236

ii. Being available to teachers and listening to their concerns..... 236

iii. Assessing teachers’ professional learning needs..... 237

2. Comparative Analysis of Teachers’ and Instructional Supervisors’ Perspectives on Factors Promoting Professional Learning..... 238

a. Areas of similarities..... 239

i. Self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology..... 239

ii. Professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection on practice..... 239

iii. Continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction..... 240

b. Areas of differences..... 240

i. Well trained administrators and

	instructional supervisors.....	241
	ii. Relevance and differentiation of professional learning experiences to teachers' needs.....	241
3.	Comparative Analysis of Perceived Role and Factors and Theoretical Role and Factors.....	242
	a. Areas of similarities.....	242
	i. Communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers.....	242
	ii. Being a leader/role model for teachers.....	243
	iii. Guiding teachers through regular follow-up.....	244
	iv. Self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology.....	245
	v. Professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection on practice.....	246
	vi. Continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction.....	248
	b. Areas of differences.....	248
	i. Encouraging and acknowledging teachers' professional learning gains.....	249
	ii. Being available to teachers and listening to their concerns.....	251
	iii. Assessing teachers' professional learning needs and differentiating professional development accordingly.....	252
	iv. Well trained administrators and instructional supervisors.....	256
4.	Perceived Roles in the Lebanese-Context.....	257
B.	Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research and Practice.....	258
	1. Conclusion.....	258
	2. Recommendations for Future Research.....	262
	3. Recommendations for Practice.....	263

## Appendix

### I. INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISORS' INDIVIDUAL

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	265
II. TEACHERS' INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	266
III. TEACHERS' FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	268
IV. INTERVIEW PROBES.....	270
V. FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES: FUNCTIONS.....	271
VI. FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES: FACTORS.....	272
REFERENCES.....	273

## TABLES

Table	Page
1a. Methods of Data Collection.....	89
1b. List of Instructional Supervisory Roles and Functions that Promotes Teachers' Professional Learning.....	96
2. Instructional Supervisors' Role in Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning: Being A Liaison.....	98
3. Instructional Supervisors' Role in Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning: Fostering trust.....	106
4. Instructional Supervisors' Role in Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning: Encouraging participation in decision-making.....	125
5. Instructional Supervisors' Role in Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning: Supporting teachers' instructional practices.....	133
6. Instructional Supervisors' Role in Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning: Evaluating instructional practices.....	145
7. List of The Design of Professional Learning Activities.....	158
8. The Design of Professional Learning Activities.....	160
9. List of Teacher Characteristics.....	179
10. Teacher Characteristics.....	180
11. List of School Conditions and Context.....	203
12. School Conditions and Context.....	204

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Quality education is a desired goal of all schools and societies. While there are many facets of school-life and the organization of a school to consider, generally the role of an instructional leader seems to be a major component contributing to the overall quality of education. The literature claims that when school policies and educational leaders focus on improving instructional and professional development practices, then teacher professional learning is more likely to happen and student achievement will improve (Blase & Blase, 1999a; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Day, 1999; Glickman, 2002; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Lieberman, 1995a; Reeves, 2010). Additionally, research supports the notion that instructional leadership is an effective leadership model especially because it focuses on improving and developing teachers' instructional practices as a means to enhance student achievement.

Understanding how instructional supervisors, such as principals, vice-principals, coordinators, department heads and people in leadership roles, can best support teachers' professional learning to improve the quality of their practice and ultimately student achievement- remains an issue of great interest in the field of education. Research carried out by King (2002), Elmore (2000), and Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2000) establish that the role of an instructional supervisor stretches beyond the scope of the school principal to also include other instructional supervisors. The characteristics of instructional supervisors and their daily practices have been discussed at length (Blase & Blase, 2004; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004; Hoy & Hoy, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2009).



Researchers in the field of instructional leadership and professional development have only recently started to examine a link between instructional leadership and teachers' professional development (Blase & Blase, 1999a, 2004; Reeves, 2010). In their 2004 study, Blase and Blase found that several leadership activities support both novice and experienced teachers' development in a school. Their study has revealed three primary elements necessary for professional learning to occur: (1) conducting instructional conferences, (2) providing staff development, and (3) developing teacher reflection. What's more, Blase and Blase's (2004) research revealed that effective instructional supervisors promote teachers' development as 'reflective practitioners' and not 'technicians', lessens teachers' sense of isolation, enhances teacher's sense of efficacy and participation in decision-making related to instructional matters. Therefore, the literature reveals that at the forefront of any professional development is a leader equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitude and behavior (Blase & Blase, 1998; Blase & Kirby, 2000).

Meanwhile, many researchers examined the qualities that 'make for' effective professional development and specifically professional development that promotes teachers' professional learning (Lieberman, 1995; Lieberman & Miller, 2001; Webster-Wright & June, 2009). Researchers in the past and today, specifically in the West, have come to a consensus with regards to effective professional development. They agree that it should not be a sporadic experience, as is the case in many schools to this day; rather, it should be an ongoing process. They explain that the reason most schools still offer episodic workshops, or what they call 'professional development', is that policy makers have not yet targeted ongoing professional learning seriously as the main focus in promoting teachers' professional growth and satisfaction (Downey

& Frase, 2001; Freedman, 2003; Fullan, 1995; Glickman, 2002; Lieberman, 1988; Louis & Mark, 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Yair, 2000).

Webster-Wright (2009) is one of the few researchers who has extensively reviewed research on professional development and concluded that “these programs for the most part still focus on ‘delivering content’ rather than ‘enhancing learning’” (p.702). Consequently, she called for re-conceptualizing professional development and focusing attention on “understanding and supporting authentic professional learning and to maintain high-quality practice” (p.702), and called on educators to understand how professionals (i.e. teachers) learn. The work of other researchers Blase and Blase, 2009; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2002; Lieberman & Miller, 1991; Sergiovanni, 2009), resonates with Webster-Wright’s (2009) call for re-conceptualizing professional development emphasizing that staff development can no longer afford to be viewed as an isolated set of workshops, but as part of the school culture and aligned with the school goals especially in terms of sustainable organizational development. Additionally, Cole (1995) said that a well-developed staff development and training plan balances the discrepancies between levels of knowledge, skills and attitudes staff already possess with those needed for the job.

Glickman et al. (2002) explain what professional development should ‘look-like’ for teachers:

Professional development must be geared to teachers’ needs and concerns. Research on successful professional development programs has shown an emphasis on involvement, long-term planning, problem-solving meetings, released time, experimentation and risk-taking, administrative support, small-group activities, peer feedback, demonstration and trials, coaching, and leader participation in

activities... It is time to change the perception that professional development is a waste of time well spent. Viewing teachers as the agents rather than the objects of professional development will be the impetus for such change (p.386).

They conclude that it is time to view teachers as the agents rather than the objects of professional development, as this would be the impetus for such change in terms of how professional development is practiced.

In essence, there seems to be an agreement that effective professional development needs to be continuous, meaningful and geared towards improved student achievement (Blase & Blase, 2009; Cole, 1995; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2002; Lieberman & Miller, 1981; Webster-Wright, 2009). What's more, the literature has also found that professional development initiatives are headed by people, (i.e. principals, instructional supervisors), who deal with matters of curriculum and instruction, and who work directly with teachers (Blase & Blase, 1998; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2009). This being said, the question remains 'How do instructional supervisors go about supporting teachers professional learning?' Moreover, there is widespread evidence, in Western literature that supports the notion that leaders who focus on fulfilling instructional supervision functions have an impact on teachers (Blase & Blase, 1998; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Cotton, 2003; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2002; Flath, 1989; Glickman, 2002; Reeves, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2009).

In Lebanon, 'professional development' - in the form of in-service training, off-campus workshops, professional growth plans, or reflective practice- is being increasingly adopted by schools to improve one's professional knowledge and skills (Hariri, February 2008; Malas, June 2009; Moukarzel, December 2005; Shabeeb,

June 2011). However, whether or not schools' professional development programs in Lebanon are focused on promoting professional learning and implemented accordingly is still not clearly understood. A review of a report from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon does little to describe what 'continuing professional development' entails and how instructional supervisors can provide and support such development (Mneymneh, 2011).

Moreover, interest in instructional leadership is relatively new in Lebanon and unfortunately not widely developed. What is evident from one of the latest studies conducted in Lebanon is that instructional leadership practices are more evident in high-achieving schools (Mattar, 2012). In Lebanon, research on the practices of instructional supervisors especially in relation to promoting teachers' professional learning is still needed to shed light on how instructional supervisors' behaviors, knowledge, and skills can be refined to offer the best support for teachers' ongoing professional learning.

### **Rationale**

Based on the reviews of international literature, there is a need to understand professional learning and how instructional supervisors' promote teachers' professional learning (Webster-Wright, June 2009). The link between the concepts of 'instructional leadership' and 'professional learning' lies in the fact that researchers agree that the people who work directly with teachers on matters of curriculum and instruction, such as instructional supervisors, significantly influence teachers' professional learning (e.g. Blase & Blase, 1998, 1999 a & b; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 2004; Glickman, 2002; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Lieberman, 1995; Reeves, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2009). Research studies clearly indicate that one way to improve the

quality of education is to support teachers' professional learning (Flath, 1989; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Yet the main problem with the traditional way of applying and thinking of 'professional development' is that it focuses more on the training aspect of teacher development rather than focusing on planned, meaningful, continuous 'professional development' tailored to individual needs and based on adult learning theories (Webster-Wright, June 2009). This being the case, most research put emphasis on designing professional development and on educational leaders' roles as instructional leaders to promote teachers' professional development practices (Blase & Blase, 1999a, 2004; Reeves, 2010). However, scholars have emphasized recently the need to 're-conceptualizing' professional development by shifting to focus on professional learning (Webster-Wright, 2009). The distinction between the two lies in 'delivering content'- which is common of 'one-size fits all' workshops and PD programs- and 'enhancing learning' which is the purpose of professional learning.

It is important to mention that while there are studies about instructional leadership and professional learning, there is limited research that has attempted to understand professional learning from the perspective of the professionals themselves i.e. instructional supervisors and teachers- on how professional development is delivered and more importantly how professional development is experienced. As a result, Webster-Wright and June (2009) invites scholars to conduct more research in order to understand more about how instructional leaders can holistically promote teachers' professional learning and call them to explore teachers' continuous professional learning from the perspectives of the professionals themselves. She argues that there is a need:

.... to understand more about Continuous Professional Learning from the perspectives of professionals themselves, within the context of everyday professional practice with its attendant workplace agenda. Through choosing to focus on understanding the experience of Continuous Professional Learning rather than evaluating the delivery of PD and by using holistic, situated research approaches to investigate CPL, this reframing of PD challenges the problematic nature of much current research in this area. Such research seeks to understand professionals' experiences of learning in a way that respects and retains the complexity and diversity of these experiences, with the aim of developing insights into better ways to support professionals. Such research needs to draw from the fertile body established empirical research into PL (p. 714-715).

This study follows Webster-Wright's recommendation and intends to develop an extensive understanding of professional learning from the perspectives of instructional supervisors and teachers in the Lebanese context.

In Lebanon, research directly linking how instructional supervisors' promote teachers' professional development is scarce.

While there has been research in Lebanon regarding teacher's professional development (Hariri, 2008; Malas, 2009; Moukarzel, 2005; Shabeeb, 2011), then research about principals' leadership style (Hamadeh, 2006; Harb, 2011; Wazen, 2007) and more recently a study about instructional leadership styles in public Lebanese schools (Mattar, 2012) no research conducted has as of yet explored the concepts of 'instructional leadership' in relation to teachers' 'professional learning'.

Moreover, in the context of Lebanon, no research that attempts to understand the perspective of teachers on their professional learning could be found, especially

one that considers their perspectives on the factors that hinder and promote this learning. This study is seeking to understand how professional learning can be improved by understanding teachers' experiences of learning as professionals through exploring perspectives from both those who experience the learning-teachers- and those who are explicitly involved in promoting professional learning-instructional supervisors.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study is based on the assumption rationalized in the literature that instructional leaders' (i.e. instructional supervisors') practices promote teachers' professional learning and that by exploring the factors that support teachers' professional learning research could help in 'developing insights into better ways to support professionals' (Webster-Wright & June, 2009).

The purpose of this study is threefold: first, to understand how instructional supervisors promote teachers' professional learning in private schools and in Lebanon. In the context of Lebanon, instructional supervisors are individuals i.e. principals, heads of section, or coordinators- who work directly with teachers on matters of curriculum and instruction (Wazen, 2007); second, to understand teachers' professional learning from instructional supervisors' perspectives as well as to understand teachers' perspectives regarding how they experience professional learning as provided by their instructional supervisors; and finally, to examine and identify the characteristics of instructional supervisors' practices that promote or hinder teachers' professional learning so as to provide recommendations for improving instructional leadership practices pertaining to professional development as a means to offer teachers meaningful professional learning experiences. For these reasons, the study will aim to answer the following research questions:

1. How do instructional supervisors' perceive their role in promoting teachers' professional learning?
2. What are the contextual factors that instructional supervisors' believe enhance or hinder the effectiveness of teachers' professional learning experience?
3. How do teachers' perceive instructional supervisors' role in promoting their professional learning?
4. What are the contextual factors that teachers' believe enhance or hinder the effectiveness of their professional learning experience?
5. What do the similarities and differences between instructional supervisors' and teachers' perspectives reveal about how instructional leadership promotes teachers' professional learning?

### **Significance**

Lebanese school leaders will gain new insight about instructional leaders' practices, behaviors, skills, and knowledge that support teachers' professional learning. Additionally, understanding instructional leadership challenges can help leaders be better informed and hence better serve and sustain teachers' professional learning.

The implications of this study to research are of great value especially because it examines how instructional leaders promote teachers' professional learning in a new context- Lebanon. The results of this study will provide useful suggestions to instructional leaders, teachers, and policy makers. The reasons for re-emphasizing personalizing professional learning to suit adult learners at different ends of the learning spectrum include: respecting their intelligence and experience,



involving them in important school decisions, and allowing them to assume greater professional responsibility just to name a few.

The results of the study could reveal the need for improvement and/or identify best practices, which policy makers and practitioners can implement. Ultimately, it is hoped that policy makers will develop an insight in current and effective practices that will help them draw up policies and plans that call for: (1) the implementation of instructional leadership and (2) the launching of effective professional learning support systems.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several instructional leadership factors that promote teachers professional learning. This literature review is organized into two sections- the first section discusses instructional leadership in light of enhancing teachers' professional learning and examines such links as documented in studies; the second section discusses the need for professional learning for teachers' career path and important support systems that promote teachers' professional growth.

Section one begins with an overview of the concept of instructional leadership, as well as notions of collaboration and challenges of implementing instructional leadership practices including the benefits of effective instructional leadership practices. Next, we explore the role and responsibilities of the principal pertaining to instructional leadership and explore the instructional supervisor practices that promote teachers' professional learning. Last, we examine the important link between instructional supervision and professional development.

Section two begins with background that describes how the concept of professional learning developed from professional development and professional learning models and trends that positively affect teachers' professional growth. Next, a discussion about adult learning theories focuses attention on the importance of understanding how adults learn as crucial to meeting teachers' professional needs. Last, we examine the many conditions that promote teachers' professional learning such as teacher training and the conditions under which teachers work.

## **Background**

This section will examine the emergence of the concept of instructional leadership in the field of education and also examine how the role of instructional leadership shifts from principal to the shared responsibility of all staff members.

There are two central reasons that explain the reality of the principal's job today. For starters, the demands and responsibilities placed upon the person who assumes the job of principal are ever increasing. Secondly, the nature of the principal's role within the school is multi-faceted. Principals in today's schools are expected to carry out a myriad of functions as well as assume a variety of different roles. According to DeLuca, Rogus, Raisch and Place's (1997) research "The literature on educational leadership clearly emphasizes that the principal is a highly complex and demanding role" (p.105). Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) described the changing role of the principals over the past two decades as becoming, "dramatically more complex" (p. 144).

In Hallinger's (1992) study, the principal was identified as the person who could have the greatest impact on school improvement. During the 1980's, the role of the principal underwent intense scrutiny. The idea that effective schools must have effective leadership functioning at the school level was a logical outgrowth of the effective schools research (Sheppard, 1996). Edmonds (1979a) and Brookover and Lezotte (1977) have singled out the principal as the most significant individual in the creation of an effective school. Dow and Oakley (1992) state that, "The research on school effectiveness has identified a number of factors that appear important in identifying effective schools. One factor that appears consistently in all of the studies is principal leadership" (p.34). Due to the results of the effective

schools research, it has been accepted that strong leadership results in significant school improvement.

The 1980s were a critical time when principals were called upon to assume greater responsibility as instructional leaders- focusing on teachers instruction and students' learning. An increasing number of research on effective schools during the 1980s (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Hawley & Rosenholtz, 1984; Purkey & Smith, 1983) directed policymakers' and scholars' attention towards principal leadership. This emerging research established that the role of principal as "instructional leader" was crucial to a school's effectiveness (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Bossert et al., 1982; Dwyer, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). While the literature shows that there were earlier attempts to study the effect of principals' role on school effectiveness (e.g. Erickson, 1967; Gross & Herriott, 1965), the time during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s were important in shifting major attention explicitly toward instructional leadership.

In 1985, Hallinger and Murphy provided three dimensions of instructional leadership where the leader: manages the curriculum, defines the mission, and promotes school culture (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a). Then in 1989 in Wilma Smith and Richard Andrews's review of the literature of the 1980's uncovered four major trends. All these trends centered on the interactions between the school principal and teachers (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Smith & Andrews, 1989):

1. *The principal as resource provider*: providing necessary resources to achieve desired vision and goals; recognizing staff members' efforts; and delegating power to key people in school.
2. *The principal as instructional resource*: remaining abreast of the latest instructional strategies and techniques to facilitate good teaching

3. *The principal as communicator*: sharing and leading school towards school vision; using active listening skills; working with all stakeholders to achieve school culture in order to work toward a positive environment; and modeling teamwork and collaboration.
4. *The principal as visible presence*: out of office talking with students, and teachers (about student learning and best practice); being encouraging, positive, and accessible; and promoting a positive school culture and climate.

In addition to the abovementioned, Fredericks and Brown (1993) emphasize that the success of a school is a result of principals practicing these instructional leadership roles.

Then the early 1990s experienced a slight shift in focus. There was a rising interest in transformational leadership (Miles, 2002). Briefly, transformational leadership, first developed by James McGregor Burns in 1978, refers to leaders who empower the school community to work towards common school goals, to be collaborative and professional, and foster teacher development and problem solving skills (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990).

In addition, the late 1990s experienced a shift from singular responsibility, usually held by the principal to shared responsibility among faculty. In the late 1990s, the need for instructional leadership resurfaced when Richard DuFour (1991) and DuFour and Eaker (1998) reemphasized the need to improve classroom instructional practices to improve student achievement. He strongly advocated the creation of collaborative teams where teachers work and learn together to improve student achievement. DuFour (1998) developed six characteristics of a professional learning community:

1. Shared mission, vision, values and goals

2. Collective inquiry
3. High performing collaborative teams
4. Action orientation and experimentation
5. Continuous improvement
6. Results oriented

The development of a professional community needs a strong instructional leader. DuFour (1998) asserts that principals play a vital role in creating the conditions that make it possible for schools to become professional learning communities. Principals are the ones entrusted with upholding and communicating the school mission and values on a daily basis. They also create appropriate structures that facilitate teacher collaboration. Moreover, principals should encourage teachers to be leaders and have confidence in teachers' abilities to lead collaborative teams. Lastly, they must truly understand that continuous improvement requires continuous learning (DuFour, 1998).

Other researchers such as McEwan (1994) and King (2002) also acknowledged the value of collaborative work in improving instruction. As a facilitator, the principal would provide support and opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (King, 2002). Among the key tasks that principals must perform to be effective instructional leaders in a professional learning community include: shifting the focus of instruction from teaching to learning; developing collaborative structures and processes for teachers to work together to improve instruction; and making sure that professional development is ongoing and focused on school goals (Lunenburg & Irby, 2006). To accomplish sustained success for all children, principals/instructional leaders are urged to: (1) focus on learning, (2) encourage collaboration, (3) use data

to improve learning, (4) provide support, and (5) align curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Fullan, 2010; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2003; Marzano & Waters, 2010).

In the 2000s, research efforts in instructional leadership focused on principal leadership influencing student-learning outcomes (Elmore, 2000; Reeves, 2010).

Many of the themes that were addressed during the 1980s and 1990s were readdressed: advancing effective instructional practices, emphasizing the school's vision, communication, collaboration, and placing a pronounced emphasis on effective professional learning (Elmore, 2000; Reeves, 2010).

Based on DuFour's (1991) theory of professional learning communities and Hallinger and Murphy's (1987) dimensions of curriculum and instruction to improve instruction and the role of the leader, Richard Elmore (2000) asserts that the principal "...should manage the conditions of learning so as to produce a given result" (p. 9). To create effective professional learning communities, the instructional leader needs to have vast knowledge and understanding of curriculum and assessment (Elmore, 2000). Furthermore, Elmore argues that instructional leaders must safeguard teachers from distractions to allow them to focus on teaching and learning. The same idea holds true for principals- superintendents need to buffer any distractions away from the principal or any formal instructional leader so that they too can help teacher with instruction. Similarly, Brewer, Susan, and Charles (2001) summarized the core of instructional leadership as focusing on: instruction; building a community of learners; sharing decision-making; maintaining the basics; leverage time; promoting ongoing professional learning for all staff; redirecting resources to support a versatile school plan; and creating a climate of integrity, inquiry and constant improvement.

What's more, a concept in educational leadership that shares common aspects with instructional leadership is distributive leadership. Elmore (2000) believes that

schools must adopt a distributive model, “Distributed leadership, then, means multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organization, made coherent through a common culture” (p. 15). Both distributive leadership and instructional leadership emphasize the creation of a common culture, and working toward a common goal or vision in order to improve instruction.

Over the years, the role of instructional leadership has changed from an ‘individual’ responsibility to a ‘school-based’ responsibility. The one element that remains true throughout this review and in relation to the purpose of instructional leadership is that the principal remains the key facilitator of instructional leadership in school.

### **Defining Instructional Leadership**

The leadership literature offers an array of definitions of what constitutes ‘leadership’ and researchers agree that schools differ widely in terms of their needs and resources, as well as in the type of leadership required to move them forward (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Sergiovanni, 2009). The literature traditionally defined leadership based on traits, behaviors, roles and processes. Yukl (1998) for instance says, “Researchers usually define leadership according to their individual perspectives and the aspects of the phenomenon of most interest to them” (p. 2). With this in mind, Yukl (1998) synthesizes these definitions in the following statement, “reflect[s] the assumption that [leadership] involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization” (p.3). Similarly, Hoy and Miskel (2001) affirm that “leadership should be defined broadly as a social process in which a member of a group or organization influences the interpretation of internal and external events, the choice of goals or desired outcomes, organization of



work activities, individual motivation and abilities, power relations, and shared orientations” (p.394).

Furthermore, Hoy and Miskel (2000) have grouped leaders’ behavior into three categories: personality, motivation and skills. Personality traits include personal attributes that are inherent to an individual’s actions and demeanor such as emotional maturity, self-confidence, stress-tolerance, energy and integrity. Motivation traits consist of a person’s drive, intensity, power, and expectation levels. Skills are related to effective leadership include appropriate task knowledge and professional expertise needed to achieve goals and objectives laid down by an organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). In a combined research from seven countries concerning participants’ perceptions of successful principal leadership, Leithwood (2005) learned that five of the countries’ participants reported the following personal attributes as necessary: skilled communicator, perceptive and flexible thinker, willing and careful listener, open-minded and creative problem solver.

Especially in the field of education, the definition of leadership developed. Van de Grift and Houtveen (1999) define educational leadership as “the ability of a principal to initiate school improvement, to create a learning oriented educational climate, and to stimulate and supervise teachers in such a way that the latter may exercise their tasks as effectively as possible” (p. 373). Now, instructional leadership epitomizes this definition in practice. Researchers of the past and today agree that instructional leadership includes principal behaviors that set serious standards and clear goals for student and teacher performance, observe, offer and encourage professional growth for all staff members, and help create and uphold a school climate of high academic standards (Blase & Blase, 1999; Bossert et al. 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Murphy, 1990; Weber, 1997).

Moreover, Research on instructional leadership indicates that dimensions of the principal's leadership role are becoming more firmly assimilated into the principal's behavior (Hallinger, 2004). Some terms used to describe instructional leaders' personal qualities include: *strong, directive leaders* who had been successful at "turning their schools around" (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Bossert et al., 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a, 1985b, 1986). In slightly more details, Daresh (1991) addressed six behaviors and characteristics of instructional leaders: (1) awareness of personal beliefs; (2) understanding organizations; (3) demonstrating awareness that instructional leadership is an ongoing process; (4) sensitivity to different perspectives; (5) consistency of personal behavior; and (6) ability to understand people. The six behaviors and characteristics have shown to have great impact on schooling outcomes.

The active notion in the school community is that the quality of teaching and learning is fundamentally dependent upon an individual or group, which practices decision-making responsibility for the expertise of schooling- that is to say curriculum, teaching, and learning. Researchers have investigated and pinpointed the positive results that instructional leaders have upon schooling outcomes. To condense the research, Murphy (1990) identifies four behaviors and routines that exemplify effective instructional leaders. Such leaders:

- blueprint a mission and goals and transform them into professional practice;
- direct and run the educational production task;
- encourage an academic learning climate; and
- Build-up a supportive work environment. (1990, p. 169)

Over and above, as instructional leaders, principals are expected to be responsible for the success of a school. Hence, as instructional leaders, principals are

encouraged to build leadership capacity in others, especially teachers, as a means to manage the challenges of achieving school goals. Sergiovanni's (2009) definition reminds researchers and educators that 'principal leadership is only part of the answer to establishing successful schools' (p.196); it is the amount and the quality of *leadership density* that exists in the school that actually propels it forth on a steady and gradual path of improvement in terms of student achievement and teacher professional learning. *Leadership density* is defined as 'the total leadership available from teachers, support staff, parents, and others on behalf of the school's work' (p.197). This claim isn't to snuff the principal's role in building and maintain leadership density, but rather an affirmation that a principal's leadership can be construed as an enabling practice. Accordingly, 'it is crucial to build up the leadership capacity of others' as the principal is the 'leader of leaders' (p.197). According to Sergiovanni (2009), such an enabling practice entails helping teachers, students, and staff to improve performance for the sake of the school and its purpose, to assist more effectively in the formal and informal aspects of the school, and to advance the realization of the school's objectives.

Thus, as maintained by Cross and Rice (2000), a principal who desires to be an instructional leader must: communicate and embody a vision and commitment to high student achievement; set high expectations; create a trusting working environment; be an effective communicator; and possess the courage to ask for help. What's more, Blase and Blase's (1999a) study revealed similar findings. The results of study revealed a huge consensus among the 800 teachers interviewed that the following behaviors were the most effective in improving teaching and learning: good communication skills, collaborative relationships, and promoting personal growth through staff development and reflection.

What's more, such complex organizations as schools need an instructional leader with impeccable communication skills in order to integrate school structures related to tasks and objectives with human relation activities in order to support teachers (Ekvall & Arvonen, 1994; Hoy & Miskel, 2007; Yukl, 2002).

Other researchers in the field of instructional leadership offer similar definitions of instructional leadership some variations. According to McEwan (1994) a good instructional leader needs to have the following key qualities and behaviors, "vision and a knowledge base, be willing to take risks and put in long hours, be willing to change and grow constantly, thrive on change and ambiguity, and empower others" (p.13). Along the same lines, Kouzes and Posner (2003) stated: "Five key qualities of leaders at their best are when they challenged the process, inspire a vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart" (p.8). For leaders to be a source of inspirational motivation, they provide meaning and challenge for their followers' work (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

In other words, leaders become cheerleaders for team spirit and display and communicate: commitment, clear expectations, positive praise, enthusiasm, and optimism towards all followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Additionally, Hoy and Hoy (2003) state "Above all, the principals must communicate a clear vision on instructional excellence and continuous professional development consistent with the goal of the improvement of teaching and learning" (p.2).

### **Collaboration**

According to Anita Hoy and Wayne Hoy (2003) the instructional leader is responsible for instruction but that he/she should not be the only one involved in instructional matters. Hoy and Hoy (2003) believe that principals must forge a partnership with teachers, as they are the ones who "deliver instruction in the

classroom and have expertise in curriculum and teaching” (p.2). This partnership is the all-important step in improving teaching and learning. Hence, it is important for instructional leaders to build relationships with teachers.

Day (2000) found that in successful schools, both teachers and staff members admitted that their instructional leaders (head teachers in the school) are «values led» that is to say that they are: people-centered, achievement-oriented, inward and outward facing, promoting values of care and equity within the school and especially in terms of its decision-making processes. By the same token, such successful head teachers deal with and resolve several ongoing tensions and dilemmas all at once.

### **Challenges Applying Instructional Leadership**

Despite the recommendations aforementioned, there are quite a few roadblocks preventing instructional leadership from reaching its full potential. Despite principals’ efforts to practice instructional leadership tasks, “the organizational context in which they work and the set of skills, beliefs, and expectations that they bring to their role” are major obstacles to effective leadership (Murphy, 1990, p.181). Obstacles, such as insufficient training and preparation in instructional leadership duties and behaviors, are plentiful and common. The reality of most principals’ daily routine, which involves attending to a multitude of urgent problems, leads principals to perceive problems associated with curriculum, teaching, and learning as only secondary. This is so because principals believe that teachers can deal with these matters, all the while the principal can, so to speak, “put out the fires” of problems that arise (Murphy, 1990).

And from the instructional leaders’ perspective, it is interesting to note what pressures of schooling and leading they had to contend with in order to offer their

teachers and staff members “successful” leadership for their schools (Day, 2000).

Day’s (2000) list includes eight tensions:

1. leading versus managing
2. program development versus maintenance
3. autocracy versus autonomy
4. personal time versus not teaching
5. personnel development versus dismissal
6. personal time versus professional tasks;
7. power versus power with ; and
8. subcontracting versus mediating.

School life is diverse and complex and it is important to be aware of challenges instructional leaders face performing their role on a day-to-day basis.

### **Research Studies on Instructional Leadership: Instructional Leadership and Student Achievement**

The focus on student results, achievement, and learning at high levels has lead to greater demands for accountability requiring the principal to be instruction oriented. The desired quality of instruction is possible when teaching and learning become the main focus of the school and the main focus of the principal (Blankstein, 2010; Bulach, Lunenburg, & Potter, 2008). Hence, the roles that adults play in the school- what professionals achieve and what they are supposed to accomplish- are key to the school’s organization and functioning. As the coordination and implementation of a variety of school functions are wide and complex, a range of school related roles are distributed among administrators and teachers (Sergiovanni, 2009; Spillane, 2006). In general terms, the core responsibilities administrators and teachers assume include: teaching and learning; working effectively with support

staff- who guarantee the school's safety and orderliness; as well as a multitude of auxiliary or specific services and administrative support (Hanson, 2003).

The need for principals to be instructionally oriented implies that he or she practices some, most, if not all, instructional leadership roles. According to Andrews and Soder's (1987), the principal is only responsible for providing teachers resources as a means to improve instruction. Providing teachers with opportunities to share ideas through professional development, professional conversations, and acknowledging teacher's strengths are examples of 'resources' used to improve instructional practice (Andrews & Soder, 1987). On the other hand, most effective school research agrees on common instructional categories necessary for improving instruction: supervision and evaluation, professional development, tracking student progress, assisting teachers, developing teachers' skills and abilities, and respecting instructional time (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a; Heck, 1992; King, 2002; Larsen & Harty, 1987 as cited in Quinn, 2002; McEwan, 1994).

One of the functions of an instructional leader is planning and implementing professional learning for teachers- this is also known as staff development or professional development. Carefully selecting, running, and continuing effective professional learning necessitates a knowledgeable instructional leader in tune with the school's mission and vision. According to Rebores (1984), the following six traits are important for any instructional leader responsible for promoting teachers' professional learning, the list includes- "instructional skills, management skills, human relations abilities, political and cultural awareness, leadership, and self-understanding" all of which are necessary to be an effective instructional leader (p.177). Payne and Wolfson (2000) remarked that crucial to leading effective teacher

learning, the principal should aspire to be the role model for continual learning- he or she is a teacher of teachers.

Reviewing research regarding the link between leadership behaviors and how students learn, for example Hallinger and Heck (1996) and Leithwood and Riehl (2003), reveals administrative impacts on students' involvement in academic work and rate of academic success (e.g., Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, (1996) study in this regard reveals direct and indirect empirical connections between leadership and learning outcomes. Edmonds (1979a) and Brookover and Lezotte (1977) believe that principals have a direct impact on student outcomes, most especially student learning.

According to Cotton (2003) effective instructional leaders are deeply engaged in curricular and instructional matters that directly affect student achievement. Additionally, other research proves that this important role stretches beyond the school principal's capacity to involve other leaders as well, such as: (1) central office personnel (superintendent, curriculum coordinators, etc.); (2) principals and assistant principals; and (3) instructional coaches (Elmore, 2000; King, 2002; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2000).

Decades of research show that when principals place academics as a priority observed improved student achievement (Bartell, 1990; Cotton, 2000; Johnson & Asera, 1999; Short & Spencer, 1990). What's more, factors such as promoting a vision; aligning the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and standards; concentrating on data; and sustaining a culture of continuous learning- are found to be paramount to impacting classroom instruction and student achievement (Lashway, 2002).

Mattar's (2012) study specifically examines the degree to which instructional leadership is implemented by principals in Lebanese intermediate public schools. Her



sample included ten public schools- five high-performing schools and five low performing schools. Overall, the results analyzed from both qualitative and quantitative data revealed that principals performed significantly better on ‘climate-related’ functions (Hallinger & Murphy, 1983) - i.e. providing positive support; creating a motivating environment; protecting instructional time - and ‘technological functions’ (Hallinger & Murphy, 1983)- i.e. sharing and helping teachers in the preparations of lessons and materials; making frequent classroom observations and providing feedback about teachers (Hallinger & Murphy, 1983 as cited in Mattar, 2012). According to Mattar’s (2012) results, “Principals at high-achieving schools...were better in: providing positive support, creating a motivating environment, maintaining high visibility, maintaining a spirit of collegiality and efficiently distributing tasks among teachers” (p. 523-525).

However, the data reveals that both high-performing and low-performing schools were ineffective in providing feedback to their teachers- a function closely related to principals “sharing and helping teachers in lesson preparation” and “promoting new instructional practices” (Mattar, 2012 p.525). In her conclusion, Mattar (2012) suggests that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education must ensure that future principals are adequately certified and prepared.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal**

In order to provide a clear overview of the roles and functions of instructional leadership, a synthesis of different instructional leadership models will be considered. Instructional leadership of a school leader represents a set of behaviors categorized into the following dimensions: Defining and Communicating Shared Goals; Monitoring and Providing Feedback on the Teaching and Learning Process; Promoting School-wide Professional Development and Creating School Climate and Health

(Blase & Blase, 1999b, 2004; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hoy, Hoffman, Sabo, & Bliss, 1996; Murphy, 1990; Weber, 1996). The dimensions listed are defined as follows:

- *Defining and Communicating Shared Goals*: refers to the leader working collaboratively with staff to characterize, communicate, and help in accomplishing data-driven shared school goals. Aside from orienting and focusing staff around a common purpose to work towards, goals are constantly referred for making organizational decisions, aligning instructional practice, procuring curricular materials, and setting targets to check progress.
- *Monitoring And Providing Feedback on the Teaching and Learning Process*: refers to instructional leadership activities center around the academic curriculum. The activities consist of activities such as being visible throughout the school, conversing with students and teachers, giving praise and feedback to teachers, students and the school community concerning academic performance, and making certain that instructional time is not interrupted.
- *Promoting School-wide Professional Development*: includes leader behaviors that support life-long learning. This means that the instructional leader encourages teachers to gain more knowledge and a deeper understanding about student achievement via data analysis, plans and offers professional learning opportunities that are aligned with school goals, and furnish teachers with professional literature and resources that support best and up-to date school practices.

- *Creating School Climate and Health*: According to Hoy, Hoffman, Sabo, and Bliss (1996) school climate and health refers to “the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behaviors of its members.” More accurately, “school climate is the relatively stable property of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior, and is based on their collective perceptions of behavior in schools” (p.4).

There are several aspects of an instructional leaders’ role that could enhance teachers’ professional learning, hence a further examination of the role of instructional leaders.

### **Effective Instructional Supervision Practices in Promoting Professional Learning**

The main purpose of instructional leadership is to improve teaching by supporting teachers in developing and growing in their abilities, knowledge and skills. Andrews, Basom and Basom (1991) affirm that the central focus of instructional leadership is to improve instruction and one of the ways this is successfully achieved is by implementing supervision as a means to improve teachers’ skills and abilities.

As stated by Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998), supervision in its most basic form should be understood as the means to assist and support teachers in improving their instructional skills and abilities. Later, Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2005) encouraged a developmental approach to supervision, as it is a process that benefits the supervisors, teachers and ultimately students.

Developmental supervision is defined as the application of “...certain knowledge, interpersonal skills and technical skills to the tasks of direct assistance, group

development, curriculum development, professional development, and action research that will enable teachers to teach in a collective, purposeful manner uniting organizational goals and teacher needs and provide for improved student learning” (p.9).

As confirmed in the studies by Zepeda and Ponticell (1998), Glickman et al. (1998) and Pajak (1989), effective supervision research affirms that supervision is an indispensable function of instructional leadership. Also, Sergiovanni and Starratt’s fifth edition of their popular supervision text, *Supervision: a Redefinition* (1989) helps provide a new outlook on the practice. In their analysis, they differentiate between two forms of supervision- traditional and hierarchical, and democratic and professional. The new definition of supervision in popular and effective supervision such as peer clinical supervision, mentoring, action research, program evaluation, transformation of school mission, and other arrangements of teachers as colleagues working together to improve understanding their practice. As a result of this redefinition of supervision, the instructional leader/supervisor acts as an advocate, developer, and the all important link in relationship to the teachers’ efforts to improve the process of teaching and learning (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1989, pp. xviii-xix).

Pajak (1989) confirms that practitioners concur that the knowledge, attitudes and skills of an instructional leader are important to an effective supervisory practice. Similarly, Zepeda and Ponticell (1998) also identified specific features of supervision at its finest: validation, empowerment, visible presence, coaching and a means for professionalism (p.3). In terms of important supervisory tasks, Glickman (1998) listed five: direct assistance, group development, professional development, curriculum development, and action research.

Important to understanding the effective instructional leadership is to clarify what it “is” and “is not”. Generally principals attend poorly or even not at all to their instructional leadership responsibilities due to lack of knowledge regarding how to provide teachers effective instructional supervision and leadership. When principals decide to develop instructional leadership skills and abilities, they must be conscious about the negative impact of improperly applied instructional supervision.

In Blase and Blase’s (1998) book *Handbook of Instructional Leadership* the authors discuss how successful instructional supervision positively impacts learning. To emphasize the effectiveness of successful instructional leadership behavior, Blase and Blase (1998) felt compelled to caution principals, who wanted to see results in classroom instruction and student results, about the negative impacts of ineffective or nonexistent instructional leadership.

Blase and Blase (1998) have also included in their handbook results on abusive principals/instructional supervisors: failing to effectively facilitate instructional conferences, staff development, and teacher reflection. Additionally, teachers experienced higher rates of interruption, abandonment, criticism, and dictatorial control. Instructional leader behaviors that were found to have a negative effect on teachers included: discounting teachers’ needs, isolating teachers, withholding resources from teachers, spying on teachers, overloading teachers, criticizing teachers, threatening teachers, giving teachers unfair evaluations, and preventing teacher advancement (Blase & Blase, 2004). Through their interviews with teachers, Blase and Blase (2004) learned that teachers felt that their creativity was limited by these behaviors. Additionally, teachers claimed that they could not take risks instructionally and preferred to stick to traditional teaching methods as they lacked their instructional supervisor’s support.

Blase and Blase (2004) observed that ineffective supervision practices of instructional leaders (i.e. principals, heads of departments) can become authoritarian in nature which “limits teacher involvement in decision-making, unilaterally directing a wide range of instructional aspects of teachers’ work, and manipulating teachers to control classroom instruction” (p.146). Furthermore, their study revealed that the controlling aspect of instructional leaders’ supervision practices has a “negative impact on teachers in the following areas: motivation, anger, self-esteem, fearfulness, confusion, loss of respect and trust for the principal, thoughts of quitting, and lack of communication with the principal” (p. 147). Besides, Ballenger (1996, as cited in Blase & Blase, 2002) also “found that the principal’s use of direct controlling strategies to influence teachers’ instruction-related behavior results in teacher compliance and/or resistance; in contrast, the use of supportive and empowering strategies was linked to teacher commitment and compliance” (p.21)

After examining ineffective supervisory behaviors, exploring what a supervisor should aspire to be as successful instructional leader that enhance teachers’ professional learning is essential. Today, researchers and practitioners in the field of education have been consciously moving away from a negative image of supervision towards a more professional and encouraging practice where supervisors (i.e. instructional leaders) work closely with teachers to bring out the best in their abilities and to deliver instruction in tandem with the best, current and effective teaching practices.

In more recent studies, i.e. Sheppard (1996) and Blase and Blase (2004), showed a positive relationship between a principal's instructional leadership behaviors and teacher commitment, teacher professional learning and teacher innovativeness. Furthermore, schools that promote building a collaborative practice

of teaching facilitate school-based shared decision-making through such practices as coaching, reflection, group investigation of data, study teams, and risk-laden explorations to solve problems (Dowling & Sheppard, 1976; Glanz & Neville, 1997). Such practices exist within a “community of learners”, who, by definition are, ‘professionals’ who offer academic and principled service to students.

Blase and Blase (2004) highlight significant principal behavior that impacts teachers’ professional learning. Their study was founded on two general concepts: “(1) Spoken language has a powerful impact on teachers’ instructional behavior and (2) facilitative, supportive actions by principals as instructional leaders have powerful effects on classroom instruction” (p.5). These concepts are drawn from the notion of “conversational competence” (Hymes, 1971), which speculates that by studying interaction (with particular focus on communicative skill) educators can develop a clearer picture about specific instructional interactions (such as those between principals and teachers) and conference interchange in diverse circumstances. Similarly, Blase and Blase (2004) reemphasize that because the practice of supervision is more collaborative and reflective nowadays (Glickman et al., 2001) a closer examination of “conversational competence” can be studied among peer teachers, coaches and mentors. Hence, in essence the study offers several exemplars of successful instructional supervision in terms of practice and it also explains the advantages of advancing reflective, collaborative, problem-solving contexts for dialogue about instruction.

Blase and Blase’s (2004) data revealed that “successful instructional leaders used five primary conference strategies along with other instructional interactions, including (1) making suggestions, (2) giving feedback, (3) modeling, (4) using inquiry, and (5) soliciting advice and opinions” (p.30).

Overall, the study revealed that instructional supervisors gave suggestions proactively thus positively impacting teachers' instructional performance and students' learning. Making suggestions was especially successful when instructional supervisors adhered to most of the following guidelines: "(1) they *listened* to teachers before making suggestions; (2) made suggestions in an effort to *expand* and enhance teachers' thinking and skills; (3) shared their own professional experiences to promote teacher reflection; (4) in some way offered ideas for improvement of teaching by modeling and reading about teaching strategies and best practices; (5) provided teachers discretion to decide whether or not they would apply the suggestion; (6) supported instructional changes even if such changes contradicted instructional policy (7) rigorously encouraged teachers to take risks in an effort to improve instruction; (8) dispensed literature on effective instruction; (9) suggestions were made 'face-to-face' and/or in writing to recognize teacher's strengths and accomplishments; and finally (10) created a 'culture of instructional improvement' in school by remaining abreast with best and current instructional methods and educational research" (p.30-35). The effects of such instructional supervisor behavior: "strongly enhance teacher reflection and reflectively informed instructional behavior" (p.36).

Aside from a "leader's" leadership style, behavior, knowledge and skills, research in instructional supervision has found that teachers' professional learning and instruction improve through self-awareness. The concept of reflection is a necessary aspect of instructional supervision and professional development. Instructional leaders and teachers engaged in reflective practice do improve their professional effectiveness- instructional leaders lead more effectively and teachers' teach more effectively. Research suggests that job-embedded learning, reflection on



practice, professional portfolios, journals, support systems, networks, peer coaching, mentoring and engagement in professional associations are among the best methods for achieving substantial professional growth (Peterson, 2002; Skrla, Erlandson, Reed, & Wilson, 2001). For this reason, educational research places a lot of emphasis on developing reflective practice within schools and is therefore considered to be a practice that promotes professional learning.

The concept of reflection-in-action (i.e. in the workplace) is not new. In Dewey's 1933 book, *How We Think*, he defines reflection as "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and further conclusion to which it tends" (p.49). It is this sort of practice that supervision and professional development seek to achieve in their instructional leaders and teachers.

Likewise, Blase and Blase (2006) noted key instructional supervisor skills needed for reflective practice and explained the benefits this had for teachers. The instructional supervisor needs to:

- model effective teaching;
- show interest through formal and informal observations;
- create dialogue on instruction;
- allow teachers to experiment with instruction;
- give teacher praise;
- create relationships based on trust and collaboration; and
- allow time for the reflective process to develop (p. 99).

As for the positive results on teachers' behavior, reflective practice increased "motivation, self-esteem, confidence, and sense of security" (p. 99).

Again, at the heart of reflective practice is self-awareness. Some teachers are by nature more reflective than others, but instructional supervisors have a duty to encourage reflection in all learners in their schools, both students and adults (Garmston & Wellman, 1999). Through reflection, teachers become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and focus on self-improvement in order to grow as professionals; and for instructional supervisors, developing teachers' reflective thinking allows them to pinpoint areas for professional learning (Reagan et al, 2000). The instructional supervisor must strive to create a working environment that helps teachers expand their skills and abilities through reflection, collaboration, shared leadership and empowerment.

It is generally understood that the end purpose of teacher supervision is focused professional learning to improve teacher effectiveness; however, Linda Darling-Hammond (2010a), an education policy expert and professor of education at Stanford University, noted in a presentation that well under half of all teachers in the United States receive continuous professional development, mentoring or coaching or engage in peer observation as a result of evaluation. This finding has serious implications for policy makers and supervisors in forcing them to take a long hard look at the state of supervision and professional learning and design, implement and assess an effective supervisory practice that supports teachers' continuous professional learning. Therefore, instructional leaders and policy makers need to hone in on selecting and practicing supervision methods that work based on the school's size, culture and climate (Donaldson, 2001; Hanson, 2003; Lieberman, 1988; Prosser, 1999; Sergiovanni, 2009).

## **Instructional Supervision and Professional Development**

Peterson and Warren (1994) note that the new demands on schools (regarding change in curriculum and technology), and the need to improve schools- are the driving force pushing forth- professional learning programs. In addition, Peterson and Warren (1994) views teacher development as means to develop a ‘total learning community’. Teacher professional development programs may take on many different forms, but overall they include conferences, seminars, workshops, visits and training courses, which are usually offered by an organization or individual. Also, teachers’ professional development is a well-selected set of programs designed to assist “personnel to meet school districts’ objectives and also provide individuals with the opportunity for personal growth and professional growth” (Rebore, 1982, p. 12). Prior to coining the term professional learning, staff development (a.k.a. professional development) was the term used by professionals to refer to teachers’ advancing their knowledge and skills. Hence, it is useful to review how staff development is a critical role of supervision.

### **Staff Development and Supervision**

Staff development and supervision complement each other and serve to improve instruction. McQuarrie and Woods (1991) realized that staff development is a precondition for supervision as it offers teachers and supervisors alike with basic knowledge of instruction and supervision. Further, McQuarrie and Woods (1991) list four reasons illustrating how staff development and supervision improve instruction:

- Staff development and supervision are practices designed to help teachers be more effective;

- Staff development and supervision aim to cultivate a judgment-free process to improve instructional practices in a non-threatening environment;
- Supervision can be practiced by teachers, supervisors, and/or administrators; and
- Participation in both staff development and supervision raises feelings of ownership, commitment, and trust in instructional improvement (p.94).

As a result, the instructional supervisory process requires principals or assigned instructional leaders to know teachers' professional development/learning needs in order to better support their teachers' professional growth and instructional effectiveness.

Glanz (2006) reminds us "professional development is undoubtedly an invaluable learning activity to support teachers and to improve student learning. However, much of staff development is content-weak, episodic, and at its worst, irrelevant to the needs of teachers" (p.84). Because some staff-development is still organized in a top-down hierarchical fashion that necessitates all teachers regardless of their experience to attend, the practice is not beneficial to a teacher, a group of teachers or a specific situation. Staff-development becomes a waste of time and energy. This is all the reason why instructional leaders need to organize meaningful and continuous professional development that enhances teachers' professional learning. Blase and Blase (2006) addressed these weaknesses in recommended solutions to improve staff development by establishing conditions that promote the learning and growth of professionals:

- Focusing on the importance of studying teaching and learning;

- Facilitating collaboration among educators;
- Fostering coaching relationships among educators;
- Applying action research to inform instructional decision-making;
- Making resources available for redesigning programs;
- Applying the principles of adult growth, learning, and development to all stages of the staff development program (p.52).

Educational research verifies the important role the principal possesses in facilitating such meaningful change in schools (Boyer, 1983; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Lieberman & Miller, 1981; Smith & Andrews, 1990). To enhance professional learning and thereby increase both the principal's and teachers' knowledge and skills, the principal or formal instructional leader must practice instructional leadership and supervision- effective supervision entails "validation, empowerment, visible presence, coaching, and a vehicle for professionalism" (Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998 p. 70). By practicing peer-coaching or action research, the supervisory process aims to move teachers towards the self-directed approach of teacher-reflection. Furthermore, as instructional leaders work closely with teachers they understand their needs and provide appropriate professional learning experiences. At this point in a teacher's professional development, he/she is more likely to be treated as a professional who possesses "a body of knowledge, skills, and practices that must be continually tested and upgraded with colleagues" (Glickman, 2002, p.4).

Thus far, three key ideas have been discussed regarding effective instructional supervision practices that promote teachers' professional learning: (1) supervision is a necessary instructional leadership function and skill used not only to evaluate teachers but more importantly as a means to improve teachers' professional learning; (2) prior to researchers and educators using the term 'professional learning'

to refer to meaningful and continuous professional development, the term ‘staff development’ was used and instructional leaders implemented staff development plans or programs that were known to them at the time; and (3) with the knowledge that staff development/professional development of the past was content-weak, episodic, and irrelevant to teachers professional learning needs, researchers, such as Blase and Blase (2006) recommended solutions for addressing such weaknesses.

All in all, effective instructional leaders “provided staff development opportunities which addressed emergent needs for teacher” (p.6). Such prospects, along with teacher participation, discretion in attending, and support for advancement, resulted in enhanced “teacher innovation/creativity, risk taking, instructional focus, as well as effects on motivation, efficacy, and self-esteem” (p.6). Furthermore, the study revealed a fascinating trend whereby effective instructional leaders frequently became learners themselves when they participated in staff development sessions (Blase & Blase, 1999b). This very practice motivated teachers’ professional learning in the sense that they felt that instructional leaders modeled expected teacher behavior and shared such profound and authentic interest and passion for learning.

What’s more, instructional leaders working on large scale staff development used action research to inform instructional decision-making as a means to encompass student readiness, progress, conduct, and achievement (Glickman et al., 2004). This is an effective form of staff development as teachers are in the forefront of action research and intimately involved with the ‘ins and outs’ of effective instruction in their classrooms. This is consistent with Calhoun's (1994) thesis that, without class and school-based data about learning, teachers cannot properly determine the effects of what they do in the classroom.

## **Practical Strategies for Professional Development**

Checkley (2000) argues that rather than just focusing almost exclusively on teacher supervision and evaluation as the main tasks of instructional leadership, principals should instead consider how to promote and develop teacher growth and development within their own learning curve. Correspondingly, Checkley (2000) presents practical solutions to bridge the gap. The first suggestion is for instructional leaders to develop a vision that involves effectively engaging teachers in continuous collegial dialogue. Such discourse would focus on what student learning should look like, and hence design instructional approaches that are in agreement with the vision communicated. Equally important, instructional leaders should create conditions through which teachers can identify instructional goals, hence enabling them to be attentive to teaching and learning and to work together. Additionally, it is important for instructional leaders to fully engross themselves in the effort and lessen the burden by offering teachers support, encouragement, the challenge they require as teachers, and act as a team for the purpose of attaining more important goals.

However, involving everyone in professional discourse is merely the first step.

Within this supportive and professionally challenging environment, principals function as instructional leaders in these and so many other ways. Instructional leaders encourage a continued effort to improve the school's technology (Checkley, 2000). The school culture they build must showcase collegiality and professional discourse. And in efforts to promote reasonable professional behavior among colleagues, instructional leaders pay particular attention to modeling for teachers the significance of trust, the willingness to listen, as well as giving and accepting feedback. Furthermore, these leaders also celebrate teachers' accomplishments and

achievements. Finally, these instructional leaders help members within the local community to experience, to commemorate, and advocate the school's success. This is achieved by providing the local community with several opportunities to become meaningfully involved in the school (Checkley, 2000).

Exploring similar ground, King (2002) recommends three practical proposals for instructional leaders. For starters, instructional leaders are advised to host two monthly meetings of about three hours each for teachers and administrators to talk about possible gaps they may discover in curriculum, teaching, and learning. The premises of this idea are that instructional leaders are setting up the conditions for teachers and administrators to spot troubles with the technology of education as groundwork for considering how, while moving ahead, educators might deal with gaps they have found.

Next, King (2002) advises inviting outside experts as it helps provide teachers and administrators a general idea of the research related to curriculum, teaching, and learning as a means to contextualize the situation in their school within a bigger framework. What is more productive is understanding how these gaps are connected to wider issues in society and culture as a means to help teachers and administrators feel more comfortable in understanding what these gaps expose. And once more, instructional leaders are shaping the condition for teachers and administrators to grapple with the challenges facing them so that they can cope with these impediments.

Finally, instructional leaders should help focus teachers more attentively upon their work by coordinating peer visits and data collection. The objective for teachers and administrators is to focus upon identified gaps with an awareness of the wider context from which these problems stemmed. This practice helps instructional



leaders pave the way for setting up a context for teachers and administrators to develop a statistical base for benchmarking the existing situation and, as teachers and administrators plan and apply intervention strategies, to affirm performance strategies, to create improvement plans, and to evaluate progress or lack thereof (King, 2002).

King (2002) argued that the implementation of the following practical recommendations, with emphasis on improving curriculum, teaching, and learning, communicates to teachers the instructional leader's professional development plan, which in turn holds teachers accountable for outcomes. Barth (2001) observes that decision-making in areas of curriculum, learning, and teaching were almost exclusively reserved to the principal- typical of a hierarchical setup in a school. These tasks included: selecting textbooks and instructional resources; designing the curriculum; establishing standards for student behavior; determining whether students are tracked into special classrooms; planning professional development and in-service programs; setting programs; arranging promotion and retention policies; adjusting school budgets; assessing teacher performance; choosing and hiring new teachers; and, most notably deciding on new administrators. What's more, an important key point is that as strategies are translated into professional goals, these recommendations, as suggested by King (2002), allow instructional leaders to work productively with teachers and administrators to improve educational outcomes, to make use of inadequate resources properly, to develop a more professional culture, and to cultivate a community of learners (King, 2002).

In such particular contexts then, instructional leaders are more intent upon building what King (2002) calls "professional learning communities" (p.62). A professional learning community is namely "an environment that fosters mutual

cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as educators work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone” (DuFour & Eaker, 1986, p. xii). On this subject Sergiovanni (2009) wrote that such focused effort leads to, is a buildup in leadership density in schools. In other words, leadership density allows instructional leaders, such as principals, to create conditions that facilitate the growth of teachers as leaders especially in the fields of curriculum, learning, and teaching. However, instructional leaders and administrators cannot be expected to create conditions for enhancing teachers’ professional learning without the help of the teachers who are expected to receive or experience professional learning plans or programs. Hence, researchers in the fields of instructional leadership and professional learning agree that while the responsibility of professional advancement rests on the shoulders of administrators and leaders, school faculty and staff must share in the establishment and maintenance of school goals and values (Elmore, 2000; Hallinger, 2003; Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Maeroff, 1988; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008).

With this point in mind, effective school research also found that promoting greater teacher decision-making power allowed for greater instructional improvement as teachers gained a sense of ‘ownership’ and ‘empowerment’ for any decision or project they were responsible for (Maeroff, 1988). School site autonomy must be increased with greater decision-making power invested in classroom teachers (Bonito, 2012; Zhu, 2011). And slowly but surely, teachers should be the next instructional leaders in line and should be responsible for making decisions about instructional strategies, professional development, curricular materials, pupil assignments and scheduling, structure of learning time during the school day, instructional goals beyond those set by the state or local school board, school-level

budgetary matters, and elements of professional evaluation (Bell, 2011; Edwards, 2010a).

This section of the literature review has explored the background, definition, and characteristics of effective instructional supervision practices in promoting professional learning. The next section will review professional learning and professional development literature. It explores how an understanding of professional development practices should continue to improve and evolve to meet the needs of adult learners all the while providing teachers meaningful and continuous learning opportunities aligned with school goals. More specifically, such literature argues for a change of how professional development is conceptualized and practiced.

### **Professional Learning and Professional Development**

#### **Background: From Professional Development to Professional Learning**

Continuous professional development needs to be available to all teachers at all levels of a teacher's career. Some researchers suggest that professional development efforts should be 'teacher specific' and focus on day-to-day activities at the classroom level (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010; Sisk-Hilton, 2011). Others, point out that special attention to individuals, in terms of their needs and interests, is detrimental to the progress of a school. They believe it is so because it might sidetrack the school from ultimately achieving its goals. Rather, such research recommends a more systemic or structural approach to professional development (National Staff Development Council, 2001). Some scholars emphasize that reforms in professional development must be instigated and carried out by individual teachers and school-based personnel (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2010). Others emphasize that the most successful programs are guided by a clear vision that go beyond the walls of individual classrooms and schools, since individual teachers and school-based

individuals generally lack the possibility to devise and put into practice worthwhile improvements (Childress, 2008; City, 2010). Others insist that the broader the scope of a professional development program, the more effort required of teachers, and the greater the overall change in teaching style attempted, the more likely the program is to bring out teachers' zeal for improvement leading to better implementation (Elmore, 2005; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000).

Such claims in the field of professional development seem to hold true in the Lebanese context. A research conducted by Moukarzel (December 2005) in an American and Jesuit French school regarding how schools facilitated teachers' professional development through in-house training yielded interesting findings in terms of teachers' professional learning and morale. She states "...teachers in both schools have high positive feelings about their in-house training experiences as well as motivation for continuous professional growth" (Moukarzel, December 2005 p. VI). Furthermore, Moukarzel's (December, 2005) research indicated that regardless of the differences between the American school and Jesuit French School in terms of professional development structures and procedures, teachers in both schools participated in in-house activities year long both within and without school walls.

Another study, completed in a private school in Lebanon (Shabeeb, 2011), examined how teachers' reflective practice develops within an in-house professional development program (Shabeeb, 2011). While teachers were engaged in reflective practice collectively and individually, they were unable to 'foster higher levels of reflection'. Because teachers expressed different levels of understanding of reflective practice, the researcher suggested that teachers could become self-directed reflective practitioners if the professional development program assumes a developmental approach (Shabeeb, 2011).

Furthermore, it has been well documented that several schools remain enthralled by staff development experiences that have been suspect and similarly there is barely enough evidence to support the effectiveness of these experiences (Gross, Booker, & Goldhaber, 2009). In Reeves's book 'Transforming Professional Development into Student Results', he insists that it is the "degree of implementation of a program' that enhances student achievement' and not the 'brand name". He goes on to say that "it is practices and people, not programs, that make the difference for student achievement" (2009 p.3)

On the subject of individual and organizational focus, Reeves (2006) built on past research and claimed that, because of a myriad challenges in education nowadays, teachers must be furnished with a clear and detailed process that bridges the gap between what 'research' recommends ought to happen for improvement to take place and 'practice' how these recommendations translate into action 'on the ground' in light of contextual challenges and still meet students' needs. According to Blase and Blase (1998), deep commitment about the content and implementation of professional development comes about when teachers are meaningfully involved and engaged in the planning of professional development. In their description of 809 teachers from the northwestern, mid-western, and southeastern United States, they established that professional development had to take place in the daytime, group teachers during free common hours, start or end school at different times and release students accordingly, and raise funds to hire substitute teachers (Fullan, 2000; Murphy, 1997). Besides, according to Kelleher (2003), professional development was even more effective when it was rooted in teachers' work. Research has shown that when successful implementation of aligned instruction and curriculum come about, it is mostly due to the following reasons: principals had prepared staff

development that helped teachers to learn together on a regular basis, maintain a strong commitment to all students' needs and support each other as adjustments are made in instruction (Strickland, Ganske, & Monroe, 2002). What further widened the research-practice gap is when teachers worked in isolation as they seldom modified instructional practices (Greenwood & Maheady, 2001).

Additionally, Reeves' (2004) premise was influenced by other research regarding characteristics of meaningful professional development for working teachers which help increase their learning abilities (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000); and those characteristics were examined by Guskey (2003), Hawley and Valli (1999), and Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001). They established that principles for quality professional development include: (1) it is related to student learning; (2) the objectives are understandable and acknowledged, (3) entails teachers' active learning, (4) professional learning is job embedded, (5) is current and continuous, and (6) professional development is connected to a basic inquiry as to the best and current teaching practices and which strategies are more suitable. Moreover, a study of 42 teachers in one site partaking in professional development, realized that teachers experienced an enhanced sense of professional knowledge and collegiality as they experienced quality professional development (Everett, Tichenor, and Heins, 2003). In their study of two veteran teachers of intensive math, Borko, Davinroy, Bliem, and Cumbo (2000) learned that teachers developed better conceptual knowledge, exhibited greater expectations for their students and permitted active student participation when they planned and implemented assessments that were aligned with instructional goals.

Moreover, Reeves (2006) recognizes that particular teaching strategies have been more fruitful than others, and he insists on the instructional leader to lay down a

clear course for the professional development plan. At Oceanview Elementary in Virginia, for instance, the instructional leader and team leaders offered professional development, and within five years time reading scores improved by 37 percentage points. Correspondingly, Albert-Laszlo Barabasi's (2003) research showed that effectual leaders got hold of key members in their schools and encouraged their commitment to shape new models of instruction. People entrusted in such positions are expected to share information, squash harmful rumors, teach critical skills and were role models in terms of values consistent with desired improvements. As the need for effective instruction as a means to improve student achievement became a critical, concern about effective professional development practices became a topic of great importance.

With respect to current empirical research in PD practices, the majority is evaluative (e.g. Eckstrom, Homer, & Bowen, 2006; Hicks, Bagg, Doyle, & Young, 2007). Rather than critically questioning assumptions about learning (e.g. Hunter et al., 2007; Sharoff, 2006), such studies compare methods of delivery of PD through evaluating learning outcomes, focusing on evaluating solutions to the problem of learning. Such research centers attention on specialist involvement to “develop” professionals rather than supporting ongoing PL. What's more, the bulk of this research focuses on detailed issues influencing PD (program, learner, or context) rather than studying the holistic, context dependent experience of learning.

In fact, PD practices have been scrutinized as “mired in update and competency approaches” (Wilson, 2000, p.78). This perspective reinforces the perspective that it is insufficient if not meaningless to treat all professionals the same and “filling them up” with knowledge that risks going to waste. However, a few researchers have analyzed assumptions about knowledge or context, examining such

practices as reflection and collaboration within a learning context (e.g. Sandholtz & Scribner, 2006; Wood, 2007a).

Ongoing learning is an indispensable element of continuous improvement for teachers (Barber & Mourshed, 2007) and high-quality professional development supports teachers, improves their practice, and its effectiveness is long lasting (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Loucks-Horsley & Matsumoto, 1999; Supovitz & Turner, 2000). The sad reality of professional development till this very day is that numerous professional learning activities are disconnected from teachers' day-to-day practice and school improvement goals (Cohen & Hills, 2000; Kennedy, 1998).

Undoubtedly, this ongoing occurrence in schools is ever so frustrating for teachers and administrators who seem to 'stand still' in their professional development aspirations. To make matters worse for teachers and administration, more often than not, most professional development learning activities are not planned with much consideration to the needs of adult learners (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010). What's more, those who design professional development do not differentiate the learning programs according to teachers' experience and personal dispositions (e.g. works well in groups or alone). Sparks (1994) positioned that educators needed to move away from the notion of teachers acquiring new skills or fixing "bad" practice towards a research based understanding on the effectiveness of practicing reflection and inquiry type practices in tandem with newly improved professional development practices (Arlin, 1999; Olson, Butler, & Olson, 1991; Rueda, 1997).

Despite decades of research into effective PL, only modest and relatively ineffective changes are reported in PD research and practice across most professions and specifically teaching. After Ann Webster-Wright's (June, 2009) thorough scan of an extensive range of current literature, she doesn't find it surprising that little has



changed in PD practices because the discourse of PD is grossly focused on the development of professionals through providing training sessions rather than learning more about the experience of PL to support it more effectively. In short, Ann Webster-Wright (2009) suggests the following: to shift focus from “development” to “learning” and from an “atomistic” perspective to a “holistic” approach.

Other researchers also support this notion that a shift needs to be made from passive “development” to active “learning”. In higher education for example the focus is now on “learning” rather than “teaching” (Ramsden, 2003), and in the workplace the concept of “workplace learning” is being adopted (Senge, 2006). However, terms like “staff training”, “staff development”, “performance review”, and “professional development” still dominate the scene; only some organizations and schools are using “life-long learning” or “professional learning” (Webster-Wright, June 2009).

The second shift in reframing PD according to Ann Webster-Wright (June, 2009) ‘is to consider PL as a holistic experience rather than as a combination of interrelated “factors”’. Though several research and practice approaches try to manage or process these factors disjointedly, it is well-accepted that learning is profoundly reliant on interactions among the learner, the environment, and content (Jarvis & Parker, 2005). Other researchers have also highlighted the problem of ‘atomistic’ approaches in studying learning. They state that although these separate entities may be solid foundations to understanding different aspects of learning, they are somewhat insignificant and fragmented when trying to understand a professional’s learning per se; emphasizing the need to take into account all facets of learning in its complexity (Moll, 1990; Rogoff, 1995). As this is a problem in current research, educational researchers such as Hilda Borko (2004) have recommended the

need for more situated research into PD. Due to the complexity involved in the field of PL, and in efforts to make PL a more holistic experience, researchers suggest examining it in different ways. For example separating experiences into different components for analysis and then examining the link between these components (e.g. Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Pillay & McCrindle, 2005).

Up until now, a general review of the concepts of professional development and professional learning have been examined in terms of what professional development used to be and how in some schools it gradually began to evolve into meaningful professional development or what some authors now are referring to as professional learning. The three sections will further elaborate on that notion.

### **Professional Learning Models and Trends**

Before discussing professional learning models and trends, an overview of teachers' education and teaching experience will help shed light on the need for teachers' continuous professional learning throughout their career at varying personal and professional levels.

There is a need for teachers to develop higher levels of expertise, as this is also related to improving student achievement. Thus school reform efforts have highlighted the need for professional learning. Teacher professional learning is widely acknowledged as a critical component that will contribute to the effectiveness of any school (Blase & Blase, 2004; Drago-Severson, 2004; Fullan, 1997; Glickman et al., 2004; Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2009).

The importance of professional learning for supporting continuous improvement in teaching practice has been widely acknowledged worldwide.

Although the link between teacher professional learning and student learning outcomes has not always been easy to establish, research has indicated that effective teacher professional learning can make a difference (Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005; Timperely, Willson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). Useful summaries of the features that are likely to contribute to making professional development effective, have been provided by Hill, Hawk, and Taylor (2002), Pigott-Irvine (2006) and Poskitt (2001). They all concur that there is a clear expectation that schools will provide ongoing opportunities for professional development and learning, and that teachers will participate in them.

Though not all nations have created standards for professional learning, in the United States the National Staff Development Council (Hirsh, 2009; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009) has done so in hopes of helping teachers learn on the job and ultimately improve student results. In reality however, most principals have a full-time job, cannot exercise instructional leadership adequately to support teachers, and are in need of a practical method for distributing leadership (Reeves, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2009; Spillane, 2006). Similarly, Reeves (2010) found that it isn't the lack of information or research that is a hindrance; rather, it is "our collective failure to translate that information into practical actions" (p.7). This has implications for school board members and policy makers in the sense that they need to decide what not to do- what tasks, standards, programs etc. are driving us away from our set course; instead, focus on initiatives that are solely related to professional learning that affects student results (Reeves, 2010).

Teachers view themselves as learners who should continuously grow from their own practice through the processes of experimentation, problem solving, and reflection, versus seeing themselves as people who adopt what others have decided

for them (Richardson, 1998). Therefore, professional development models that promote teacher knowledge are favored over practices that present expert knowledge and require teachers to implement certain practices (Lyttle, Belzer, & Reumann, 1992a, 1992b).

What's more, in a bid to support life-long learning, all professions agree that undergraduate education is merely the beginning of learning and that for this learning to be meaningful to professionals it needs to continue throughout a professional's life (Day, 1999; Graham, 2006; Jarvis, 2004; Knapper & Cropley, 2000; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 1998b). The term *lifelong learning* has been coined across professions as a means to endorse a profound means for professionals to keep up with contemporary context of an ever-changing society, and as a means to refine and redefine their roles within specific contexts. As a matter of fact, it is the responsibility of professionals today to maintain high-quality practice by adhering to professional standards and other procedures; this is possible with continuous professional development (PD) (Friedman & Phillips, 2004). Across all professions, there are mounting demands to design and develop more effective, efficient, and evidence-based practices that deliver improved outcomes for clients; this finding is true in all fields such as teaching, nursing, engineering, and architecture (Grant, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Penz & Bassendowski, 2006). As a result, significant effort, resources, time, and immense amounts of money are invested to study, provide, and advance PD practices (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Borko, 2004).

University education emphasizes the need for the lifelong learning of professionals; unfortunately research doesn't shed enough light on the critical differences between learning as a student and learning as a professional (Webster-

Wright, June 2009). Two facets of higher education research have bearing on CPL. One investigates the intricate makeup of professional knowledge as applied in practice; the other looks into the extensive bulk of research into ‘pedagogical practices in universities that enhance preparation of students for the realities of professional practice’ (Webster-Wright, June 2009). With regards to undergraduate professional programs, understanding that knowledge is co-constructed with students is now considered best practice. And that’s why higher education programs are focusing on teaching innovative practices such as action learning, problem-based learning, and practice-focused service learning and the use of collaborative, flexible, and interdisciplinary teaching strategies (Barr, Koppel, Reeves, Hammick, & Freeth, 2005; Biggs, 2003; Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2001; Boud & Solomon, 2001; Bringle, Phillips, & Hudson, 2004; Butin, 2005; Dall’Alba, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Madden, 2000; Walker, 2001).

**Models of effective professional development.** There are a variety of professional development models; hence, the literature offers categories for the PD models and practices. Generally speaking there are three broad trends in professional development models appropriate to adult education include: (1) Multisession workshops- traditional in nature, practical, active learning activities; (2) Mentor teacher groups- activities are “reform” based, combining features of peer coaching and study circles; and (3) Practitioner research groups- activities are “reform” based, teachers collect and analyze data to investigate their own classroom regarding a question of concern. Gaible and Burns (2005) found that teachers’ professional development (TPD) can be classified into three broad categories: “(1) Standardized TPD- centralized method used to teach information and skills to a large teacher population; (2) Site-based TPD- extensive learning by groups of teachers in a school

or region, supporting reflective and continuing changes in instructional methods; (3) Self-directed TPD- independent learning, at times initiated by the learner, making use of resources that could include computers and the Internet” ( p. 25). What’s more, in Gaible and Burns (2005) review of the advantages and disadvantages of each category of teachers’ professional development they state that “although teachers are fully encouraged to participate in ongoing, self-motivated learning, self-directed activities, they cannot be employed as the main form of TPD” (p. 25). Rather, the third category of TPD is used only to complement and extend standardized and/or site-based TPD.

Whether professional development belongs to any one of the broad trends or categories listed above- multisession workshops, mentor teacher groups or practitioner research groups- Lawless and Pellegrino (2007) strongly agree that high-quality professional learning must be “longer in duration (contact hours plus follow-up), provide access to new technologies for teaching and learning, actively engage teachers in meaningful and relevant activities for their individual contexts, promote peer collaboration and community building, and have a clearly articulated and common vision for student achievement” (p.579). And while professional development can vary in models, assessment, purpose, content, grade levels and pedagogies, Harris (2007) asserts that all effective professional learning sessions must be: (1) conducted in school settings; (2) linked to school-wide change efforts; (3) teacher-planned and teacher-facilitated; (4) provide differentiated learning opportunities; (5) centered around teacher-selected goals and activities; (6) demonstrate a series of presentations/trials/feedback; (7) concrete and authentic; (8) continuous over time; and (9) characterized by continuous and available support. While this is reasonable, the reality is that there are certain aspects of school life that

hinder effective professional learning initiatives. School factors such as school climate, the availability of technology, and participants' particular needs and experience could be negatively affected if professional learning activities are not appropriately matched with teachers' needs, school goals, and the school's context.

Taken as a whole, the literature reveals that professional development can be effective only if it is continuous (not one-shot workshops), is aligned with school goals, is sensitive to school context, and sustains focus on assisting teachers not only to adopt new behaviors, but also to amend assumptions and think reflectively. Moreover, other experts in the field contend that acquiring reflective practice trumps simply adopting a new practice designed by others (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Guskey, 1999; Richardson, 1998). According to Richardson & Anders (1994b), adopting new practices is possible and welcomed as teachers reflect and systematically test whether or not this practice works well in their specific context.

Furthermore, Feiman-Nemser (2001) contends that varieties of professional learning must be delivered on a "continuum" over the course of a teacher's career- beginning with formal education (college/university courses), then initiation training (with a master teacher/mentor when beginning to teach- provided by the school), followed by activities based on the job embedded ongoing inquiry (action research or study circles- arranged by the school). Further, Feiman-Nemser (2001) insists that the school must also organize other professional learning opportunities outside of school and above all the school must sustain a cohesive learning environment for all teachers.

Although professional learning models differ only slightly in terms of classification, in essence researchers and practitioners in the field advocate teacher reflectiveness. Professional learning models are "results-driven"- focusing on student

learning vs. just teachers instruction, “systems-related”- focusing on organizational changes vs. individual change, and “constructivist”- focusing on job embedded professional learning vs. transferring skills and knowledge from expert to teacher (Guskey, 1997; Sparks, 1994, 1995). Carpenter and Franke (1998) agree with this point of view and add that getting teachers to understand how students think and reason enhances teachers’ knowledge and prolongs their ability to learn.

There are several professional learning models for improving teacher practice for student learning, yet some models are more effective than others. In 1987, Loucks-Horsley, Harding, Arbuckle, Murry, Dudea, and Willams listed five of the most effective models for professional learning: individual/self-directed, observation/assessment, school improvement, training, and inquiry. And later in 1999, Hawley and Valli listed four professional development models: workshop/presentation, observation/feedback, inquiry/research, and product/program development. More comprehensively, others discussed: mentoring; working with external consultants or ‘critical friends’; structured or personal professional reading; online learning; professional conversations; in-house programs; external workshops/conferences; and accredited courses are just to name a few (Clutterbuck, 2001; Hall, 2003; Katz & Earl, 2007; Kilburg, 1996).

According to the literature, there are three recommended professional learning models that have been proven to be highly effective- they include: action research, professional learning teams and peer coaching (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000; Ferrance, 2000; Ike, 1997; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Laycock & Long, 2009). The reason that action research is ranks so high in effectiveness is because it encourages teachers to scrutinize and develop a deeper understanding of their profession. Action research is founded upon continuous learning which



involves: ‘selecting the focus; planning; acting on the plan; observing and collecting data; analyzing; reflecting; re-planning and responding with new action’ (Ferrance, 2000; Laycock & Long, 2009). Professional learning teams serve to foster a culture of collaboration and collective responsibility (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000). Teams need to structure what their objectives are and how they will do their work so as to be successful. This process includes strategies for collecting student data, the preparation of action plans, procedures for implementation, and methods of evaluating the effect on their teaching and on student learning. Finally, peer coaching advances professional learning by helping teachers and instructional leaders develop their skills and broaden their understanding. Such practice is usually carried out by peer coaches who build solid professional relationships, utilize data and evidence, participate in serious conversations, and offer instruction with a focus on school improvement (Ike, 1997; Joyce & Showers, 2002).

All in all, successful professional learning is dependent on the instructional leaders’ knowledge of adult learning theories. The underpinnings of sound professional development and learning programs lie in a firm understanding of adult learning theories. The subject of the next section will not only provide insight into how adults learn, but also explicate how the benefits of applying such theories have significant impact on student learning.

### **Adult Learning Theories**

Knowledge about how people learn and an understanding of effective professional development models and strategies is key to meet teachers’ professional needs and accomplish important school goals (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, Donavan, Pellegrino, & National Research Council, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Loucks-Horsley, Stiles, &

Hewson, 1996). Further, there has been an important shift in perceiving the value of a teacher's knowledge and experience in assisting student learning. Rowan, Correnti, and Miller (2002) for example, have uncovered significant positive effects of teachers' teaching experience on student outcomes especially in the later or upper elementary school years. To add to this finding, the teachers' knowledge and experience in content and effective instructional strategies were linked to higher student achievement. Hence, a deep understanding about how teachers learn is imperative so that instructional leaders can better support teachers' professional learning.

There is not and probably won't be one best adult learning theory that can be implemented. Certainly though, the literature of the past has given way to a variety of models, set of assumptions and principles, theories, and explanations that shape the essence of adult learning knowledge. Without a shadow of a doubt, the more adult educators are entrenched in adult learning theories and practices, the more effective their practices will be on a personal level and the more responsive they will be to the needs of other adult learners in the practice. This section reviews the underpinnings of adult learning theories and discusses three important theories- andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformational learning- and examines their implications for practice.

Furthermore, the field of adult education distinguishes between the learning needs of children and adults- first theorized as andragogy by Malcolm Knowles (1980). Andragogy, defined as "the art and science of helping adults learn", is contrasted with pedagogy, defined as "the art and science of teaching children". Malcolm Knowles (1980) popularized the concept of andragogy in an effort to

establish the differences between the way adults and children learn. He hypothesized a set of assumptions about adult learners- chiefly, the adult learner:

- moves from ‘dependency’ to increased ‘self-directedness’ and can direct his/her own learning as they mature;
- falls back on life experiences, accumulated over the years, to draw upon and aid learning;
- exhibits readiness to learn when assuming new social or life roles;
- demonstrates a problem-centered approach to solving problems and is keen on applying new learning right away; and
- displays a love for learning that is fueled by internal, rather than external, factors.

Naturally speaking, these assumptions have implications for practice. Knowles (1984) recommends that adult educators:

- cultivate a cooperative climate for learning in the work place;
- evaluate and determine learner’s specific needs and interests;
- plan learning objectives focused on the learner’s needs, interests, and skill levels;
- design sequential activities to reach the goals;
- work in a collaborative manner with the learner to choose strategies, materials, and resources for teaching; and
- appraise the quality of the learning experience and make any necessary adjustments while assessing needs for further learning.

Adults need to know why they are learning something; hence, effective teachers prove their reasons for teaching specific knowledge or skill. Also, effective adult instruction should focus on tasks that adults could perform as they learn by

doing- similar to learning on the job. Memorization of content at this stage in a person's life is meaningless especially because he/she needs to 'test' what has been taught. Furthermore, adults learn best when the topic is of immediate use. What this means is that effective instruction of adults entails involving them in solving real-life problems.

Brookfield (2003) however, criticized andragogy calling the theory "culture blind" which basically means that the theory does not take into account how the facilitator or teacher of adults guides adult learners of different races and cultures. He states that the concept of 'self-directed' learning and the concept of the students establishing a non-threatening relationship have not been thoroughly explored. He goes on to say that people of other races and cultures may or may not value the teacher as the primary source of knowledge and direction. Despite Brookfield's valid criticism, the concept of andragogy is still pertinent to understanding how adults learn.

According to Cross (1981), about seventy percent of adult learning is self-directed in nature. And according to Tough (1971) about ninety percent of all adults accomplish at least one self-directed assignment annually. Knowles (1975) explained self-directed learning (SDL) as a "process in which individuals take the initiative, without the help of others" in planning, implementing and assessing their own learning experiences. Essentially, SDL is an unceremonious process that mostly occurs outside classroom walls. What makes learning "self-directed" is the learner making the decisions about subject matter, means, resources, and assessment of the learning. In essence, self-directed learners take responsibility for their own learning process they determine their needs, set goals, locate resources, carry out a plan to achieve their goals, and assess the results. Hence, they gain ownership or authorship

for their achievements, which leads to meaningful learning fueled by the learners' intrinsic motivating factors.

The main advantage of SDL is that it can easily be integrated into daily routines, as the learner deems suitable and according to his or her preferred learning methods. Basically, the learner is at liberty to choose the form of his/ her activities. The learner could be engaged in isolated activities such as researching information, or could be involved in discourse with experts and peers in the classroom context for example.

Not all adult learners are ready for SDL. SDL can prove to be challenging if not overwhelming for adults with low-level literacy skills who may also lack personal qualities such as independence, confidence, internal motivation, and resources. Hence, adult learners need the situation, context, readiness, and willingness to begin this endeavor. Brookfield (1985) proposes that not all learners favor the self-directed option. And still, that many adults involved in SDL could also be engaged in more formal education programs, such as teacher-directed courses. Self-direction is a critical component of diligence in adult education, aiding learners in realizing how and when to engage in self-study and when they must quit formal education. Additionally, within the adult education setting, the teacher can modify and transform the traditional classroom instruction with an array of methods to encourage SDL for individuals or small groups of learners who are ready and willing to cross the threshold and begin a journey of independent, self-directed learning experiences. Pertinent to the field of Continued Professional Learning, is the idea that self-directed learners have a greater chance of advancing professionally as they have the personal qualities, context, experience, and support to facilitate this professional growth (Brookfield, 1985).

Below are approaches for facilitating SDL (Self-Directed Learning). The teacher can aid the learner to:

- perform a self-evaluation of ability levels and needs to agree on appropriate learning objectives;
- pinpoint the starting time for a learning project;
- sort and arrange resources (books, articles, content experts) and methods (Internet searches, lectures, electronic discussion groups) to the learning objective(s);
- discuss and agree on a learning agreement that sets learning goals, strategies, and evaluation criteria;
- obtain strategies for decision-making and self-evaluation of work;
- cultivate positive attitudes and independence towards self-directed learning; and
- use reflection as a means to review and assess what he/she is learning (Brookfield, 1985).

Transformative learning (TL) is frequently explained as learning that specifically ‘changes the way individuals think about themselves and their world; such a shift in thinking requires a ‘shift of consciousness’. To illustrate, as English language learners gain confidence communicating a new language they also report a shift in their view of U.S. culture and in their view of themselves (King, 2000).

Paolo Freire (2000) for instance taught Brazilian workers to read. He accomplished this by engaging them, involving them in a problem-posing instructional approach, discussing work conditions and poor compensation. This approach worked effectively because Freire (2000) was able to design teaching

vehicles that appealed to the Brazilian workers needs and interests, thereby helping them change their thinking and fight for social change.

Mezirow (2000) describes TL as a rational process and explains how and when a shift in learning or understanding occurs. Two processes allow an individual to shift their frame of reference or world view- reflection and discussion. But more specifically, transformational learning takes place when individuals engaged in discourse challenge each other's beliefs and persuade group members to consider a range of perspectives. The requirements for transformational learning to be optimal include: participants having complete and accurate information about the topic, being free from bias, and meeting in an environment of acceptance, empathy, and trust (Mezirow, 1997a, 2000). Despite the soundness of Mezirow's TL theory, the strongest criticism is that it does not take into consideration the effect of factors such as the individual's race, class, and gender, or the context in which the learning occurs (Cervero & Wilson, 2001; Corley, 2003; Sheared & Johnson-Bailey, 2010; Taylor, 1998). What's more, Mezirow's TL theory has been judged as being 'hyper-rational, ignoring feelings, relationships, context and culture, and temporal aspects' (Silver-Pacuilla, 2003).

Taylor (2000) and Cranton (2000) proposed the following guidelines to practice transformative learning during professional learning meetings or activities:

- create a climate that supports transformative learning- a climate that is "trusting, empathetic, caring, authentic, sincere, and demonstrative of high integrity" (Taylor, 2000, p. 313).
- know your adult learners and the types of learning activities that appeal to them- for example "Case studies, debates, critical questioning, and analyses of

theoretical perspectives” are learning activities that would best suit individuals who enjoy logic (Cranton, 2000, p.199).

- use reflection through learning activities such as journal writing, writing brief autobiographical essays, and discussing academic or school related films or short stories. Such reflective techniques involve learners in meaningful and focused discussions about instruction and other school related issues in an atmosphere of trust and openness (Cranton, 2000).

In agreement with Cranton’s (2000) recommendation for advancing adult learners’ learning through reflection, the following are suggestions for applying these theories to writing instruction for adult learners (Blase & Blase, 2004):

- As writing is a natural means of self-reflection, incorporating it in more contexts in the adult education setting is effective in helping individuals articulate their learning. Furthermore, the sharing of personal writing is a great method of bringing stories of personal challenge, growth, will, and dreams into conversation. Ungraded writing exercises such as short and timed prompts such as “quick writes”, “entry/exit slips”, or “yesterday’s news” are examples of such exercises.
- And in today’s Internet communities, it is helpful to engage new adult writers online with other experienced writers. The writers participating could be taking part as contributors, readers, and peers, to advance self-directed learning, self-study, and commitment.
- Lastly, prepare and share feedback that tests learners’ ideas and intensifies their critical thinking.

Adult learning in the workplace is highly social, holistic and potentially transformative (Cranton, 1997; Freire, 1974; Imel, Gillen, & English, 2000; Willis,



Smith, & Collins, 2000). The researchers in the field of community and adult education recognize that learning entails the whole person within their socio-cultural community (Jarvis & Parker, 2005). From another related standpoint within social learning, is the notion that the workplace is the central location for both ‘continuing learning’ and ‘research into that learning’ (Boud & Solomon, 2001; Garrick & Rhodes, 2000b; Rainbird, Fuller, & Munro, 2004). This field of inquiry solely focuses on how employees learn at work and has gained momentum in the field of education. This notion of workplace learning for effective CPL has been increasingly accepted within the research community (Billett, 2001a; Eraut, 2004; Mott & Daley, 2000; Rodrigues, 2005). In addition, more complex findings in community-based urban research draw attention to the potential effect of professionals learning through active involvement in communities to address issues of social justice and diversity (Hyland & Noffke, 2005; Murrell, 2001; Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, 2006). Therefore, it is crucial for instructional leaders to pay attention to the nuances entailed in helping teachers learn throughout their career. For example, researchers’ findings in the field of adult education described adults as having different learning styles and needs (Honey & Mumford, 1992).

Bringing theory into practice is challenging, as it requires several aspects to work together in harmony. For starters, effectively teaching adults requires a profound understanding of various principles and theories of adult learning, and requires initiative for implementing some if not most of those principles to practice. It is important to keep in mind that the adult theories explored and their implications for practice are not absolute, but rather work together.

While an understanding of adult learning theories is a necessary component for improving teachers’ professional learning, there are other contextual factors and

conditions that influence teachers' learning including the extent of support they receive from their instructional leaders. According to Reeves (2010), the issue of time is yet another necessary component for 'successful deep implementation' of professional learning. However, 'the failure of leaders to provide sufficient time is almost certainly fatal to reform efforts' (p.45). He recommends that leaders spend 'time' scrutinizing the illogical ways in which time is habitually distributed in schools. Examples such as student "pullouts", "transitions" between classes, announcements, and quite frequently, how email is used, are among the few ways time can be misallocated and used ineffectively. In essence, 'fragmentation' and 'lack of focus', are not simply the symptoms of a busy school, but rather are self-inflicted with the misguided belief that multi-tasking is an effective way of getting work done.

It is ideal to reduce interruptions in the day-to-day school life; however achieving this type of harmony in a school takes understanding the retention of qualified teachers, the school environment, the culture as well as building practical work relationships. This final section of the literature review will discuss the importance of teacher qualification, work conditions, the need for establishing a professional learning community, its characteristics and implications for professional learning as necessary conditions for promoting professional learning.

### **Conditions Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning**

Deep-seated transformations in the teaching profession need to take place in terms of learning and productive employment, to make certain that all students in schools are prepared for responsible citizenship. To achieve major changes in student achievement will require a revolution in the teaching profession. There are three paths towards revolutionizing the teaching profession: restructuring teacher training,

changing the conditions under which teachers work, and providing continuous professional development throughout a teacher's career.

**Restructuring teacher training.** Over the years, educators have set up standards and specific benchmarks to further improve teaching and by doing so ascertain that teaching is a 'profession'. In the U.S., board certification for new teachers is typically awarded only upon successful completion of an intensive teacher education program (Darling-Hammond, 2010b; Lieberman, 2011), successfully passing a national teacher entrance examination developed by the profession (Hakel, 2008; Lustick, 2011; receiving certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e, 2010f), and demonstrating teaching expertise in intern and residency programs (Darling-Hammond, 2010a; Marzano, 2011).

All teacher contenders should have a broadly based, liberal arts undergraduate education, with at least one subject major (Ferrall, 2011; Harpham, 2011). Furthermore, all soon-to-be teachers should have a well-structured induction program that includes a one-year internship under the supervision of an experienced knowledgeable teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2010a, 2010b; Lieberman, 2011; Marzano, 2011).

Experienced teachers should be eligible for professional career advancement through advanced certification (Hakel, 2008; Ingvarson, 2008; Lustick, 2011). Ideally speaking, teachers should have a variety of opportunities for performing professional roles and that allow them to advance within the teaching profession, while they continue to be practicing teachers (Goldstein, 2011). In efforts to make teaching a more attractive career path, it must be structured as a lifetime career with incentives set in place (Fibkins, 2011; Marzano, 2011). Furthermore, teaching and

educational administration must be considered as two separate careers, and teacher salaries should not be limited to those paid to school administrators (English, 2011; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

Regardless of teachers' experience and educational background, an effective professional learning community can and should cater to the needs of all teachers. Coupled with effective instructional leadership, provisions for effective professional learning/development plans and professional learning experiences supported by adult learning theories- teachers can thrive and advance professionally especially within a professional learning community. According to Zepeda (1999), in order to develop a community of learners it is important to fully comprehend the elements that motivate adults' growth, enhances their professional development, and helps the school or school district become a community of learners. The PLC practice is grounded in adult learning theory and documents numerous factors critical to adult learners. As no two teachers have the same learning needs, as autonomous and self-directed adults, such professional educators need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction, and naturally they would refuse directives by others for their learning. For one thing, adults have amassed a foundation of 'experiences, knowledge, skills, interests, and competences'; they are at a stage in their development where they are interested in teaching subjects that have direct bearing on their jobs or personal lives. Nonetheless, adult learners, just like learners of all ages, need to see the fruits of their labor and receive feedback about development towards their objectives (Dallew & Martinez, 1988; Lieb, 1991; Zemke & Zemke, 1995).

**Changing the conditions under which teachers work.** Empirical research over the past twenty years has revealed interesting findings with regards to how

‘effective’ professional learning (PL) flourishes- one, is that it is best situated within a community that supports learning, such as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Garet et al., 2001; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006; Wenger, 1998); two, that it is effective when individuals are actively working with others on authentic challenges within their practice (Boud & Middleton, 2003; Burbank & Kauchak, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lieberman & Miller, 2001; Oakes & Rogers, 2007).

For this reason, researchers are calling to depart from the predominate de-contextualized PD “training” model, and instead focus on situated, flexible, engaging, learner-centered and interactive PL as a means to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Gravani, 2007; Hargreaves, 2003; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Lieberman, 1995; Murrell, 2001). There are examples of innovative PD practices in teaching that moved away from the “training” model and worked rigorously to draw upon current research into PL (e.g. Clark, 2001; Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, 2006).

Creating opportunities for reflection about practice, can further teachers’ professional advancement (Blase & Blase, 2004; Lieberman & Miller, 2004). Blase and Blase (1999) revealed that effective principal-teacher interaction about instruction functioned optimally when the following- processes, inquiry, reflection, exploration, and experimentation- were consistently practiced. According to their study, such processes allowed teachers to develop a range of flexible options about instruction rather than amassing rigid teaching procedures and methods. Blase and Blase’s (1999) model of effective instructional leadership revealed two major themes that were derived directly from their data: ‘talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional growth’ (p.3). As we have thoroughly

discussed how ‘talking with teachers’ promotes reflection and reflectively informed behaviors, we will discuss the strategies principals used to promote teachers’ professional growth or what we are referring to as professional learning.

In the Blase and Blase’s (1999) study, instructional supervisors used six strategies to promote teachers' professional learning:

- (1) emphasizing the study of teaching and learning;
- (2) supporting collaboration efforts among educators;
- (3) developing coaching relationships among educators;
- (4) encouraging and supporting redesign of programs;
- (5) applying the principles of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of staff development; and
- (6) implementing action research to inform instructional decision-making. (p.6)

Then again, some critical issues must be addressed if teachers are to become reflective practitioners and discover their particular skills. For educators this is possible to achieve when teachers receive support from members of a professional learning community (Sowder, 2007). Although it is troublesome to over-emphasize the need for collaboration, Sowder (2007), shows, that it is critical for collaborative efforts and relationships to focus on the right issues to lead to effective school reform. Furthermore, building a collaborative culture is also important to join efforts at school improvement. Nias (2005) argues that such collaborative and collegial relationships greatly affect teachers’ professional development. He believes that providing or failing to provide professional and emotional support, a support group the teacher can associate with, the possibility and incentive to grow professionally, and the prospect to inspire others, greatly affects teachers’ professional development.

Another effective behavior that principals/instructional supervisors demonstrated to help teachers grow professionally included building coaching relationships among educators. Based on two decades of wide-ranging research, Joyce and Showers (1995) have determined that coaching from a peer at the classroom level is an effective training model. In Blase and Blase's (1999) study, instructional leaders who actively encouraged teachers to become peer coaches, for the most part, allowed teachers to redesign instructional programs that assisted a multitude of varied teaching and learning approaches. Additionally, instructional leaders made certain to provide necessary resources to support program redesign. It is important to note that effective instructional leaders applied principles of adult learning, growth, and development to staff development (Donaldson, 2001; Drago-Severson, 2004; Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000). This finding is also supported by other researchers such as Glickman et al. (1995) whereby teachers noted that instructional leaders fostered cultures of collaboration, inquiry, lifelong learning, experimentation, and reflection in harmony with the principles of adult learning and an understanding of teachers' life cycles, roles, and motivation.

There are various ways for a collaborative group to form. Based on the book *Building a Professional Culture in Schools* (Lieberman, 1988) it often times has its beginnings when an individual on a personal quest gains attention from partners on that particular project. In a school environment, slow, successful processes allow for the creation of collaborative groups- even if this collaboration is a partnership of two people. Soon enough the success of this collaboration leads to the expansion of collaboration.

Almost all models and frameworks for professional learning communities promote shared decision-making among teachers and those in formal leadership

roles. They also encourage the purposeful allocation of leadership functions among professional learning community members (DuFour, Eaker & DuFour, 2005; Fullan, 2001; Spillane, 2006).

Boyd and Hord's (1994) case study of Cottonwood Creek School, a suburban pre-K-5 school with 500 students and a teaching faculty of 36 including teachers, current and former school administrators, and office staff, revealed interesting data about the dimensions of a professional learning community. By applying Hord's five dimensions of a professional learning community (1997a & 1997b), the case study was designed described factors and events that encouraged and supported the progress schools made towards becoming a professional learning community. The case study revealed that: partnerships with *external force* (i.e. university) to pilot new curriculum and *internal force* (i.e. the leadership of a strong instructional leader) were needed simultaneously to support and guide the development of a professional learning community; *shared authority* and *decision making* are needed to generate the energy and enthusiasm to establish the democratic participation of all stakeholders- administrators, teachers, other staff, students, and parents; and finally the administration must provide *schedules* and *structures* to initiate and maintain organizational learning (Boyd & Hord, 1994). Such PLC factors contribute to greater teacher commitment and empowerment (English, 2008; Northouse, 2010).

Professional Learning Community (PLC) members are- generally speaking- more driven than non-PLC members, they are more committed to work together to achieve the school goals and personal goals.

**Providing continuous professional development.** To ensure that professional learning is successful and continuous, school leaders must create a school environment for improvement that gives priority to enhancing quality



teaching (people), providing valuable feedback and supervision (practices), and planning time for implementation (program). As a matter of fact, Haycock (1998) verified a distinct and steady relationship between ‘teacher quality’ and ‘student results’. Reeves’s (2006b) research on monitoring carried out by leaders, has found that an exclusive focus on adult actions (and not just student results) ought to be frequent and practical. Moreover, just as the frequency of feedback from teachers to students is unequivocally linked to growth in student performance (Marzano, 2007), so is the frequency of observation, coaching, and feedback to adults who aspire to professional levels of expertise- this is necessary so as to observe great improvement (Colvin, 2008).

If teacher professional learning is to be judged as effective, there needs to be a set of common criteria against which such a judgment can be made. Research over the past fifteen years has reached a consensus for five key areas that are important in the design and delivery of effective teacher professional learning that can lead to improved student outcomes (Desimone, 2009).

1. **Content Focus:** What teachers learn and teachers’ learning outcomes are two professional learning focuses. The activities include building teachers’ context expertise and creating an understanding on how to deal with students’ specific learning needs.
2. **Active Learning:** the day-to-day aspect of teachers’ practice is incorporated in professional learning. Activities mainly involve teachers differentiating between actual students’ performance and goals, standards for student learning, and designing professional learning experiences based on teachers’ learning needs.

3. **Coherence:** Tantamount to quality professional learning is remaining up to date with the best available research and using various sources for information. Activities involved to maintain improvement in teacher practice include developing of the core theories underlying new knowledge and skills. Furthermore, to determine focus areas for professional learning, multiple sources of data including student achievement need to be used. Also, to guide improvement in teaching and learning, the professional learning members need to advance their knowledge and understand how to implement data.
4. **Collaborative Participation:** Collaborative problem solving is used consistently and intensively. The goals include: creating a school-wide culture of professional learning; forming professional learning teams with strong relationships between teachers, and between teachers and school leaders (especially instructional leaders) whereby all participate in active reflection of their own practice, provide feedback to colleagues, and support changes in practice.
5. **Duration:** Professional learning must be comprehensive, continuous and maintained with regular appraisals. To make this all possible, both internal and external sources of support are needed. Additionally, at specific time slots these sources must provide support to sustain teacher learning and transformation of classroom practice. Lastly, build a sense of ownership in teachers regarding taking the lead in designing and advancing their professional learning (Desimone, 2009).

All in all, regardless of the “look” and the membership, the operation of the professional learning community should enhance the knowledge and skills of participants’ all the while encouraging innovation and quality (DuFour & Eaker,

1998; Hord, 1997a, 1997b; Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). What's more, the literature reveals that a strong PLC is dependent on the principal's instructional leadership as he or she can impact the school's climate and culture (DuFour, 2001; Mattar, 2012; Sheppard, 1996; Zepeda, 2004).

DuFour (2001) describes what principals must accomplish as 'staff development leaders' to make certain that professional development initiatives create a positive and desirable change in school reform efforts. DuFour (2001) says that the most significant thing principals can do, is to set up a suitable environment that promotes job-embedded professional development. This context takes into account programs, procedures, beliefs, expectations, and norms conducive to professional learning activities (DuFour, 2001). Additionally, principals should create a collaborative school culture and structure teams to ensure that all members are contributing and providing the focus, parameters and support to help teams function effectively. More accurately, principals should (a) provide time for collaboration during the school day and school year (b) identify critical questions on teaching and learning to guide the collective inquiry of collaborative teams, (c) ask teams to create products as a result of their collaborative inquiry, (d) insist that teams identify and pursue specific student achievement goals, and (e) provide teams with appropriate data and information. For the purpose of accountability, DuFour (2001) insists that principals first and foremost must model a commitment to their own ongoing professional development all the while documenting data that backs student achievement results; and Quinn (2002) believes that instructional leadership can be learned if principals have high expectations of all members of the school community to foster a feeling of trust and perseverance. Whilst instructional leadership can be learned, Harchar and Hyle (1996) argue that in order for an instructional leader

(principal) to be effective he or she must have been a successful classroom teacher- teachers tend to respect such a credible instructional leader and advance professionally. In addition to having teaching experience and a willingness to advance professionally, instructional leaders (principals) need to build trusting relationships with teachers.

A principal can create a trusting environment by forming positive relationships with teachers, permitting teachers to take risks without consequences, offering opportunities for professional development, providing leadership in staff development, and working collaboratively (Quinn, 2002). Further the literature indicates that principals of effective schools demonstrate higher degree of human relations (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). Highly effective principals have a positive impact on teacher morale, leading to increased teacher effort, which has a positive impact on student performance. "...The supervision that promoted the development of a community of learners ... centered on changing leadership paradigms that lead to inquiry, generative problem solving, dialogue, and reflection" (Zepeda, 2004, p. 146). Furthermore, teachers engrossed in "talk about teaching" offered the "glue" that held the community together. When principals learned to let go of control of traditional responsibilities and build trust with teachers, a learning community could flourish, as these conditions were critical and necessary.

## **Conclusion**

Having reviewed the literature on instructional leadership and professional learning, it is clear that an instructional leader's professional development functions play a significant role in promoting teachers' professional learning (e.g. Andrews, Basom & Basom, 1991; Blase & Blase, 2004; Cotton, 2003; Hoy & Hoy, 2003; King, 2002; Linda-Darling Hammond, 2010).

In this regard, the instructional leadership literature reveals that supervision is a necessary function of instructional leadership as the purpose of instructional supervision is to help improve teachers' instruction and help them grow professionally (e.g. Blase & Blase, 1999; McQuarrie & Woods, 1991; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). However, there has been a major shift in the way educators view professional development programs- more and more researchers have been supporting meaningful and continuing professional learning as opposed to incoherent and unfocused professional development that doesn't cater to adult learners' personal and professional learning needs (e.g. Reeves, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2009; Sparks, 1994; Webster-Wright, June 2009). Furthermore, the professional learning literature also supports the notion that it takes a strong instructional leader to advance teachers to a higher level of expertise (e.g. Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Bossert et al., 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985a, 1985b, 1986; Sergiovanni, 2009).

This being said, together the instructional leadership and professional learning literature review support the notion that instructional leadership's professional development function is important in promoting and developing teachers' professional learning. Yet, no study has exclusively examined this phenomenon. Hence, this multiple case study will concentrate on understanding how instructional leaders promote professional learning in a new context- Lebanon. The data collected will be analyzed in light of the proposed framework and the literature review.

Details of the study are discussed in the methodology chapter that follows.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

A qualitative multiple-case study design was selected for gaining an in-depth understanding of how instructional leaders in schools in Lebanon promote teachers' professional learning through professional development in private schools. There were three purposes for this study. The first purpose was to understand how instructional supervisors promote teachers' professional learning in private schools in Lebanon. The second purpose was to understand teachers' professional learning from instructional supervisors' perspectives as well as to understand teachers' perspectives regarding how they experience professional learning as provided by their instructional supervisors. The third purpose was to examine and identify the characteristics of instructional supervisors' practices that promote or hinder teachers' professional learning so as to provide recommendations for improving instructional leadership practices pertaining to improved professional development and teachers meaningful professional learning.

#### **Research Design**

Defining the terms *professional learning* and *instructional leader* will guide data collection and data analysis for this qualitative multiple-case study design.

#### **Definition of Terms**

The terms 'professional development' and 'professional learning' are often used interchangeably in educational discourse and literature. While *professional development* is conceived as 'the full range of activities, formal and informal' that are 'provided', or that one 'does' 'that engage teachers or administrators in new learning about their professional practice' (e.g. Knapp, 2003; Little, 1993, 1999;

McLaughlin, 1994); *professional learning* refers to ‘changes in the thinking, knowledge, skills, and approaches to instruction that form practicing teachers’ or administrators’ repertoire’ (Knapp, 2003, p 112). Therefore, changes in a professional’s thinking, knowledge, skills, and habits of mind and/or changes in implementing the new knowledge and skills in one’s daily work is part of professional learning. A working definition of professional development that encompasses elements of *development* and *learning* is offered by Day and Sachs (2004):

...all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute...to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives (p. 34).

In this study, acknowledging the subtle differences between development and learning is important but completely separating the two terms is somewhat artificial. For this reason, Day and Sachs’ (2004) inclusive definition will be used as part of the framework for this study.

Since the early 1900’s, theoretical and empirical research has offered many *instructional leader* definitions and models. The definition of an instructional leader includes a set of behaviors that lead a school to educate all students to high achievement (Blase & Blase, 1999a, 1999b, 1998; Chrispeels, 1992; Larson-Knight,

2000; Sheppard, 1996); define and communicate shared goals, monitor and provide feedback on the teaching and learning process, and promote school-wide professional development (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Locke & Latham, 1990; Murphy, 1990; Weber, 1996).

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do instructional supervisors' perceive their role in promoting teachers' professional learning?
2. What are the contextual factors that instructional supervisors' believe enhance or hinder the effectiveness of teachers' professional learning experience?
3. How do teachers' perceive instructional supervisors' role in promoting their professional learning?
4. What are the contextual factors that teachers' believe enhance or hinder the effectiveness of their professional learning experience?
5. What do the similarities and differences between instructional supervisors' and teachers' perspectives reveal about how instructional leadership promotes teachers' professional learning?

### **Case Study Design**

Many definitions of case studies abound in the field of qualitative research (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1994, 1995; Wolcott, 1992; Yin, 1994). For this study, a case study was defined as follows: "A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit." (as cited in Merriam, 1998- Merriam, 1988 p.21).

The main purpose of case studies is to explore in depth the 'lives' of the participants. Case studies are believed to provide a much richer and more vivid



picture of the phenomena under study more than other analytical methods (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Researchers primarily resort to case studies when they wish to derive an in-depth understanding of a relatively small number of individuals, problems, or situations (Patton, 1990). The basis of this study was grounded in a phenomenological qualitative research convention as “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 1998).

The multiple-case studies method offers a rigorous process for collecting and analyzing data especially as the researcher explores the phenomenon under study through the use of a replication strategy that allows the researcher to identify possible patterns in the data and return to the field for more data (Yin, 1994). Conscientious application of this technique ensured that explanations for the phenomena under study developed from the data were verified during the course of the research process. This iterative process of data collection, analysis, comparison, and revision during the entire study is referred to as the "constant-comparative" method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Another objective of qualitative approach is to understand the phenomenon of interest- professional learning- from the participants’ perceptions. For this study, in order to develop an understanding of professional learning, it was imperative to examine both participants’ perspectives on the topic as this provided a unique description of teachers’ professional learning experience as well as a description of the instructional leaders’ experience helping teachers achieve professional learning.

After investigating and understanding the phenomena from the participants' point of view, i.e. teachers and instructional leaders, the data was analyzed theoretically. Whilst the researcher needed to represent participants' perspectives accurately- emic perspective, during the reflective analysis phase of the research, the researcher had to analyze and interpret the data collected conceptually and theoretically from an etic perspective in order to situate the findings in the literature (Gall et. al, 2005; Merriam, 1998).

This multiple-case study generated a thick rich description. The data collected, which was descriptive in nature, was used to develop conceptual categories to illustrate and support theoretical assumptions that emerged while gathering data to answer the research questions (Gall et. al, 2005; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998).

### **Participant Selection**

In qualitative research, researchers recommend that the sample should not be too large to the extent where it is challenging to extract thick, rich data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). On the other hand, the sample should not be too small to the extent where achieving data saturation (Flick, 1998; Morse, 1995), theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), or 'informational redundancy' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) becomes problematic. Therefore, a sample selected by the researcher that allows for optimal access, management and analysis of data is ideal. McMillan and Schumacher (1997) suggest using 'concept/theory-based sampling' when the research requires selecting information-rich individuals or sites identified with experiencing the concept or to be attempting the concept/theory.

Purposeful sampling was adopted as the most appropriate method for this type of qualitative research. Purposeful sampling involves "selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 169) specifically when a researcher

wants to understand ‘something’ about those cases without needing or wanting to generalize to similar cases. It follows that the ‘information rich’ individuals needed for this study were instructional supervisors and experienced teachers. The instructional supervisors were considered as long as they fulfilled most of the instructional leadership functions which included: defining and communicating shared goals, monitoring and providing feedback on the teaching and learning process, and promoting school-wide professional development (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Locke & Latham, 1990; Murphy, 1990; Weber, 1996). Teachers with three years (or more) of teaching experience in the school selected were considered. When talking about engaging in purposeful sampling, sampling is viewed as a series of strategic choices about ‘with whom, where and how’ to do the research (Given, 2008). Two things are implied in purposeful sampling: (1) the sample has to be linked to the objectives of the study; and (2) the “best” sample will depend on the context in which the researcher is working and the ‘nature’ of the research objective(s) (Given, 2008).

It was important that teachers who were interviewed have had ample time to experience instructional ‘supervisory’ and ‘leadership’ practices and functions as well as professional learning experiences within the sites selected. Also, as multiple cases are involved in this qualitative research design, the researcher’s main goal was to compare and contrast the chosen cases- otherwise known as ‘cross-case analyses’ (Creswell, 2007; Schwandt, 2001).

The study was conducted in two large private schools in Lebanon of different educational and philosophical backgrounds. The schools are located in the region of the greater Beirut. Basically, the schools were selected based on knowledge that they provide in-service training to teachers.

1. School A (student population 1, 250+)
2. School B (student population 2,800+)

Moreover, participants were selected from the elementary division of the schools. Research clearly illustrates that principals are the main instructional leaders- and as such, have more impact at lower grades- greatest impact at the elementary level, less at the middle or intermediate level, and least at the secondary or high school level (Leithwood, et al., 2004; Seashore-Louis, et. al. 2010). The researchers believe that elementary school principals may have more impact because they spend sixty to eighty percent of their time in the classroom, while the ‘standard’ high school principal’s job has not fully shifted into the school’s instructional leader role (Grigsby, et al, 2010).

Selection of instructional leaders is not limited to school principals. Particularly in schools in Lebanon, instructional leaders could be heads of department or coordinators (Wazen, February 2007). For this study, the researcher targeted the persons who were identified as specifically in charge of instructional supervisory functions in both schools, i.e. those who work closely with teachers on matters of instruction and curriculum. For this reason, heads of departments and coordinators were considered for this study and randomly selected based on availability..

Participants in the study were from the two schools and included: two instructional supervisors from School A, four instructional supervisors from school B, sixteen teachers from school A, and nine teachers from school B bringing the total of participants to six instructional supervisors, and twenty-five teachers. Moreover, teachers selected to participate were chosen from among those with more than three years of experience, to ensure that they have had the chance to interact with their supervisors and become familiar with the school and the instructional leaders’

practices. Such teachers, who have worked continuously within the same school system, had been more exposed to professional learning experiences and were therefore considered information-rich participants. Six teachers from each school, one randomly selected from each grade level- grades one through six- participated in the individual interviews. It is important to note that teachers who participated in the individual interviews did not participate in the focus group interviews that followed with different group of teachers also randomly selected from each grade level- grades one through six. Following the individual interviews with the instructional supervisors and the teachers, the researcher was able to conduct the focus group interviews with ten teachers from school A and three teachers from school B. Data collected and analyzed from the individual interviews was shared with the focus groups to elicit responses, enrich data, and to confirm or disconfirm information.

### **Data Collection Tools**

The key strength of the case study method involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process. Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) identified about six possible means of gathering evidence in case study investigations: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artifacts. For this study, individual interviews and focus group interviews were the techniques chosen to collect data. Documents, such as those related to instructional planning, professional learning activities, the evaluation of instruction as well as professional learning experiences, were also collected to aid triangulation.

Interviews are one of the most important sources of information for case studies as it involves direct interaction between the researcher and the individuals

being studied (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 2005). According to Irving (2006), an interview is asking to tell stories.

Irving (2006) explained that “the purpose of interviewing is to gain an ‘in-depth’ understanding of other people’s ‘lived experience’ and the ‘meaning’ people make of their experience. Interviewing allows the researcher to gain access to the individual’s “subjective understanding” (Irving, 2006, p. 10).

There are several types of interviews that basically belong to one of three general categories: highly structured/standardized, semi structured, and unstructured/informal (Merriam, 1998).

### **Focus Group and Individual Interviews**

Lately, focus group research has been accepted as “a way of collecting qualitative data, which- essentially- involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions), ‘focused’ around a particular topic or set of issues” (Wilkinson, 2004, p.177). Qualitative researchers in particular frequently depend on focus groups to collect data from multiple people at the same time. Most of all, focus groups are less intimidating to several research participants, therefore making such a setting accommodating for participants to talk about thoughts, opinions, ideas, and perceptions (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Hence, the main advantage of focus group interviews is that respondents are more likely to express their feelings and opinions than they would if they were to be interviewed individually. This is mostly due to the fact that the participants listen to one another and can also exchange ideas (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2005). Nonetheless, not all individuals are comfortable freely disclosing information in the presence of their colleagues; therefore, including individual interviews can guarantee that information shared by the participants’ is confidential (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2005; Maxwell, 2005).

Interviews served as the main data collection tool for this investigation followed by using documents to substantiate data gathered in the interviews (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). The interviewing style that was adopted was semi-structured in nature.

Two interview strategies were used with the selected participants- instructional supervisors and teachers. The researcher employed individual interviews with six instructional supervisors and twelve teachers, and focus group interviews with groups of ten teachers from school A and three teachers from school B- a total of thirteen teachers (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2005). Focus group interviews were suitable as the researcher was exploring ‘individuals’ reactions to educational programs and practices’ (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2005)- in this instance the practice of instructional leadership and how it promotes effective teacher professional development/learning (program). Sharing individual interviews results with a new selection of teachers participating in focus group interviews helped elicit responses and triggered a discussion related to the interview questions and also served as a member check.

### **Methods of data collection**

Following is a grid that shows how the data collection tools that helped answer the study’s main research questions:

Table 1a

*Methods of Data Collection*

Research Questions	Methods of Data Collection		
	Participants	Number of Participants	Tools
1. How do instructional supervisors' perceive their role in promoting teachers' professional learning?	Instructional supervisors (principals, heads of sections, or coordinators)	6 in total; 2 coordinators from school A; 2 heads of department & 2 coordinators from school B (school-elementary division)	Individual interviews; documents (i.e. instructional planning; professional learning activities; evaluation of instruction & professional learning experiences; & acquisition of resources)
2. What are the contextual factors that instructional supervisors' believe enhance or hinder the effectiveness of teachers' professional learning experience?			
3. How do teachers' perceive instructional supervisors' role in promoting their professional learning?	Experienced elementary teachers (minimum of 3 years of experience)	25 in total; individual interviews 6 teachers from each site-hence 12 individual interviews in total; 1 focus group interview per school- 10 focus group participants from school A & 3 focus group participants from school B - teachers from different grade levels (Grades 1-6) - a total of 13 participants	Individual interviews; shared all individual interview results with focus groups
4. What are the contextual factors that teachers' believe enhance or hinder the effectiveness of their professional learning experience?			
5. What do the similarities and differences between instructional supervisors' and teachers' perspectives reveal about how instructional leadership promotes teachers' professional learning?			Compared data within each site instructional supervisors & teachers; then compared the data across sites

This table represents the methods of data collection and analysis in light of the research questions.

The individual and focus group interview questions designed for the participants, instructional supervisors and teachers, were derived from the review of the international literature and were examined and reviewed by one expert in the field (See Appendices A, p 278; B, 279-280; C, p. 281-282; and D, p 283). Also, as



documents were useful for making inferences about events, and served to corroborate the evidence from other sources- they aided triangulation. Additionally, a variety of other documents such as letters, memoranda, agendas, administrative documents were important to the investigation. Archival records such as lists of names, organizational details and any other such records also served to back up other data collected throughout the investigation (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994).

### **Data Analysis**

This section presents data management and analysis methods that allowed the researcher to successfully reach and situate findings in the literature. Basically, “Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study” (Yin, 1994 p. 102). Yin (1994) offered two general analytical strategies: to rely on the theoretical propositions discussed in the study and then to analyze the evidence based on those propositions.

Multiple or comparative case studies involve two stages of analysis- ‘within-case’ and ‘cross-case’ analysis (Merriam, 1998). ‘Within-case’ analysis means that each case is initially treated as a complete case while ‘cross-case’ analysis means that complete cases are compared ‘to build abstractions across cases’ (Merriam, 1998 p.195).

The “constant comparative” method involves constantly comparing segments of data from multiple sources and compares them with another situation in the same collection of data or with another collection of data. Such comparisons helped develop ‘tentative categories’ which were then compared to each other and other situations. Organizing data collected required resorting to popular qualitative analytic techniques.

Miles and Huberman (1984) suggested using analytic tools such as developing flowcharts or data displays, planning an evidence matrix of categories, rearranging arrays, charting the rate of diverse events, making use of means, variances and cross tabulations to examine relationships between variables, and other similar techniques to facilitate the constant comparative analysis. The most suitable and meaningful analytic technique for this multiple-case study involved the use of a matrix to chart evidence in a concise manner for two purposes: (1) to manage the data during data collection and data analysis; and (2) to present a summary of the findings in the discussion section and the conclusion.

In terms of managing data, the researcher identified specific themes, constructs, and categories while collecting data; and created or modified those themes, constructs and categories during the analysis process (Merriam, 1998). For the purpose of establishing validity, the assistance of an outside researcher early in the analysis phase was needed to determine the degree of congruence in the specific themes, constructs, and categories between the lead researcher and the outside researcher.

Furthermore, the criteria used to analyze data and determine the grouping of participants' perceptions into areas of similarities and differences selected for the sub-sections in the discussion were as follows: for similarities- a. quantitatively: if both participants, 50% or more, mentioned the functions and factors; b. qualitatively: based on the nuances of the content and the meaning participants had accorded to these functions and factors; and for differences- c. quantitatively and qualitatively: not mentioned by either group of participants, or mentioned by both but where the nuances of the content shared by the participants differed.

## **Credibility of the Study**

Yin (1984) has refuted the frequent criticism that the case study method is weak in providing a generalizing conclusion as it depends on one particular case. Yin explains the difference between analytic generalization and statistical generalization: "In analytic generalization, previously developed theory is used as a template against which to compare the empirical results of the case study" (Yin, 1984); even so, the vigor of the case study comes from the multiple sources and data gathering methods.

To assure sound credibility of this study, issues of validity and reliability were considered. Construct validity was fulfilled, as the researcher adopted appropriate means for analyzing data in relation to the concepts being studied (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2005). Also, construct validity for this study was achieved by including the following multiple sources: interviews, documents, and archival records. This being said, the researcher applied two important strategies to ensure internal validity: triangulation and member checks (Merriam, 1998).

The triangulation type that was employed for this multiple-case study was data triangulation. Information obtained through the interviews was triangulated with information obtained through documents and archival records. Additionally, member checks were used to further enhance internal validity. Throughout the research, the investigator re-approached the participants (e.g. after an interview has been made) with the 'tentative interpretations' of the data gathered and checked with the participants on the information and results obtained.

Furthermore, to ensure the transferability of the study findings the researcher provided rich, thick description- 'providing enough description so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred' (Merriam, 1998 p.211). Once again the

‘multisite designs’, specifically using two sites in this study, helped ‘maximize diversity in the phenomenon of interest’. Furthermore, this design helps readers to apply results to a variety of other situations especially as purposeful sampling was applied (Merriam, 1998). And lastly, dependability or consistency were determined by observing whether the findings of the study were ‘in harmony’ with the data collected. Triangulation also strengthened the reliability (and internal validity) of this investigation particularly in terms of using multiple methods of data collection and analysis. The methods for data collection included: individual interviews, focus group interview, and the collection of documents and records; and data analysis consisted of: with-in case analysis, cross case analysis, as well as a comparison of research findings with the international literature.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was threefold: first to understand how instructional supervisors, such as coordinators and or heads of department, promote teachers' professional learning in two private schools in Lebanon; second, to understand teachers' professional learning experience from instructional supervisors' perspectives as well as to understand teachers' perspectives regarding how they experience professional learning as afforded by their instructional supervisors; and finally, to examine and identify the characteristics of instructional supervisors' practices that promote or hinder teachers' professional learning in order to provide recommendations for improving instructional leadership practices related to professional development so as to offer teachers profound professional learning experiences. In light of this, the following research questions were posed to guide this study:

1. How do instructional supervisors' perceive their role in promoting teachers' professional learning?
2. What are the contextual factors that instructional supervisors' believe enhance or hinder the effectiveness of teachers' professional learning experience?
3. How do teachers' perceive instructional supervisors' role in promoting their professional learning?
4. What are the contextual factors that teachers' believe enhance or hinder the effectiveness of their professional learning experience?

5. What do the similarities and differences between instructional supervisors' and teachers' perspectives reveal about how instructional leadership promotes teachers' professional learning?

Chapter four reports the results of the study, which includes results from: individual interviews with six instructional supervisors responsible for the elementary division; individual interviews with twelve elementary teachers; focus group interviews with a different set of thirteen elementary teachers; as well as documents and records collected pertaining to the study. Triangulation of data was done achieved through the focus group interviews conducted as well as through the examination of documents and records provided by participants. Data analysis consisted of two phases: a with-in case data analysis for each school, followed by a cross-case analysis for both schools. The constant comparative method was used to compare the responses of teachers and supervisors within each school and across schools. The constant comparative method was used to compare the responses of teachers and supervisors within each school and across schools. The research findings are reported under the following two main headings: Instructional Supervisors' Role in Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning (page 95); and Factors that Affect Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning (page 157).

### **Instructional Supervisors' Role in Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning**

The two phase data analysis revealed that instructional supervisors and teachers perceive that supervisors play a critical role in promoting teachers' professional learning. Based on the analysis of instructional supervisors' and teachers' perceptions in schools A and B, the following five categories were developed in relation to instructional supervisors' role in promoting teachers' professional learning: being a liaison; fostering trust; encouraging participation in decision-

making; supporting teachers’ instructional practices; and evaluating instructional practices. For each of the five categories subcategories, related to functions of each role, were developed.

Table 1 represents each category for the instructional supervisory roles along with specific sub-categories related to these categories subcategories of functions related to their respective supervisory role.

Table 1b

*List of Instructional Supervisory Roles and Functions that Promotes Teachers’ Professional Learning*

Roles	Functions
Being a liaison	Communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers
	Communicating teachers needs and experiences from teachers to instructional supervisors
Fostering trust	Encouraging and acknowledging teachers’ professional learning gains
	Adjusting supervision style based on teachers’ personal and professional needs
	Being a leader/role model for teachers
	Being available to teachers and listening to their concerns
Encouraging participation in decision-making	Consulting with teachers
	Sharing in decision-making
Supporting teachers’ instructional practices	Helping teachers manage their time to focus on instructional work
	Guiding teachers through regular follow-up
	Providing teachers with resources and other instructional materials
Evaluating instructional practices	Monitoring and observing teachers’ instructional practices
	Communicating instructional feedback to teachers
	Assessing teachers’ professional learning needs

Each of the above roles and functions, are represented in separate tables along with

## **Being a Liaison**

According to the results, the role of being a liaison included two functions; that of communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers on one hand, and that of communicating teachers needs and experiences from teachers to instructional supervisors on the other hand. All participants at both schools agreed that the role of the instructional supervisor as liaison is critical. All instructional supervisors at both schools believed that being a liaison plays an important role in promoting teachers' professional learning.

As a liaison, the role of instructional supervisors at both schools is viewed as relaying information pertaining to instructional matters from the administration to the teachers. Instructional supervisors clarified that as a liaison, they communicate expectations and directives reflecting instructional goals and activities as well as information pertaining to the availability of external professional development opportunities. Furthermore, their role as liaison also entailed communicating to inform administrators about teachers' professional learning needs, as well as communicating the teachers' perspectives on their experiences with students to administrators.

According to the results, all instructional supervisors at school A (2 of 2) and at school B (4 of 4) identified communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers as promoting professional learning. All teachers at school A and most teachers at school B (4 of 6) mentioned this supervisory function as well. With regards to the second function, communicating teachers' needs and expectations from teachers to instructional supervisors, most instructional supervisors at school A (1 of 2), and all instructional supervisors at school identified this function. Most teachers at school A (3 of 6), and most teachers at school B (3 of



6) discussed this function. Table 2, on page 98, represents the frequency of participants who identified these functions.

**Communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers.**

All three sets of participants interviewed at both schools agreed that one of the important roles an instructional supervisor assumes, as a liaison is that of communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers. At school B all participants interviewed conveyed their belief that the role of the instructional supervisor as liaison promoted teachers' professional learning. The participants agreed that as a liaison, the instructional supervisors would communicate professional learning opportunities, standards, expectations, and progress to teachers. Below is a representation of this category and subcategory along with the data sources as it appears in the first row of Table 2 for schools A and B.

Table 2  
*Instructional Supervisors' Role in Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning: Being A Liaison*

	<i>School A</i>				<i>School B</i>			
	Instructional supervisors' (Total of 2)	Teachers (Total of 6)	Teachers in focus group (Total of 10)	Documents and records	Instructional supervisors' (Total of 4)	Teachers' (Total of 6)	Teachers' focus group (Total of 3)	Documents and records
Communicating directives from administrators to teachers on one hand	✓ (2)	✓ (6)	✓	✓	✓ (4)	✓ (4)	✓	✓
Communicating teachers needs and experiences from teachers to instructional supervisors	✓ (1)	✓ (3)	✓	✓	✓ (4)	✓ (3)	✓	✓

✓ : mentioned

\_: not mentioned/not available

( ):Frequency of responses

Frequency of participants who identified these functions.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* With respect to communicating expectations and directives from administrators to teachers, the first instructional supervisor at school A said, "There are rules that we cannot over-step- there are certain decisions that are acceptable for us to act upon without needing to communicate with administrators, and there are other decisions that we cannot act upon without communicating with administrators. We have total discretion but within the 'frame' and confines the school has set for us." In light of communicating instructional matters between teachers and administrators, the second instructional supervisor at school A said, "I really find that communication is the most important thing. I mean teachers need this."

Both instructional supervisors at school A indicated that as liaisons clear communication plays a crucial part in ensuring that expectations are understood and met. The first and second instructional supervisors at school A clearly indicated that they discuss every teacher's professional strengths and weaknesses with administrators in order to attend to their professional learning needs. As liaisons, the instructional supervisors would in turn meet with each teacher individually to discuss their position in the school for the coming year including any professional development advice that stemmed from their meeting with administrators.

The third and fourth instructional supervisors interviewed at school B offered a slightly different perspective on their role as liaisons due to the fact that they are subject coordinators; both instructional supervisors would receive directives and expectations from their respective heads of departments and communicate those to teachers.

*Teachers' perspectives.* All teachers at school A indicated that continuous communication between the administration, instructional supervisors and teachers

surrounding school goals and standards influences their instructional work. The first, third, fourth, fifth and sixth teachers interviewed at school A basically indicated that the instructional supervisor ‘draws’ teachers’ attention to new activities related to school goals and communicates instructional options and allows teachers to select appropriate options for their classrooms. As liaisons, the instructional supervisors consult with administrators and review school and department goals; and accordingly provide teachers instructional strategies to apply in the classrooms. The second teacher at school A clearly indicated that administrators communicate with instructional supervisors to convey certain instructional directives related to professional learning.

At school B, the four teachers interviewed confirmed the instructional supervisor’s role as liaison and implied its positive impact on teachers’ professional learning-that learning occurs when information pertaining to instructional procedures, plans, teaching strategies, instructional abilities and academic goals are consistently communicated from administrators and teachers via their respective instructional supervisors- in this case heads of departments. The first and fourth teachers at school B explained that the teachers in the departments benefit from the head of departments’ involvement in department meetings because they clarify instructional procedures, plans, academic goals as well as teaching strategies in alignment with school goals. The third and sixth teachers explained interviewed at school B explained that teachers’ instructional abilities and areas for professional growth are communicated between administrators and instructional supervisors. The teachers interviewed at school B said that administrators directly communicate with teachers especially when it comes to sharing instructional recommendations. The administrator, sometimes the principal, will recommend that the teacher implement

certain instructional directives. What's more, the sixth teacher at school B added that a previous principal was effective in "conveying ideas to teachers" directly as well as through instructional supervisors to ensure that certain instructional practices were being implemented.

Data collected from focus group teachers at both schools supported the results obtained from individual interviews with instructional supervisors and teachers. Results from the analysis of documents obtained from both schools provided evidence that multiple channels for two-way communication help instructional supervisors play a critical role in enhancing teachers' professional learning experience. From school A, the document titled 'Yearly Plan Meetings' indicates that the instructional supervisor and the teachers met to discuss such matters as: scope and sequence; workshop plans and options throughout the year; lesson plans; monitoring students' workbooks and notebooks among other instructional topics. This document verifies that the instructional supervisor meets with teacher to discuss instructional goals and activities.

Documents from school B, such as the 'Organizational Chart', reveal that by being located between the principal and the teachers on the hierarchy, the instructional supervisor has a formal role of maintaining clear channels of communication between the two.

Overall, the frequency of responses from both instructional supervisors and teachers at school A indicate full agreement on the role of instructional supervisor as liaison as important to promoting teachers professional learning. At school B, all four instructional supervisors, heads of departments and coordinators, clearly explained their role as liaisons between administrators and teachers. Four teachers at school B identified this role.

**Communicating teachers' needs and experiences from teachers to instructional supervisors.** At both schools, instructional supervisors and teachers agreed that communicating teachers' needs and experiences from teachers to instructional supervisors helps improve teachers' professional learning experience. At school A, one instructional supervisor and three teachers mentioned this function, while at school B, four instructional supervisors and three teachers discussed this function. The second row of Table 2, on page 98, represents this subcategory in the second row along with the data sources for schools A and B.

***Instructional supervisors' perspectives.*** The second instructional supervisor at school A explained that any feedback she receives from teachers about certain workshops and any other professional learning needs, are communicated back to administrators in order to develop more effective professional learning activities for teachers. She explained that principals can rely on instructional supervisors for more elaborate and accurate information about teachers' performance rather than relying on parents' impressions of a certain teacher's performance as the instructional supervisor is the one who knows the those teachers very well- especially through extensive observations. The second instructional supervisor at school A explained,

The second instructional supervisor at school A explained, "So sometimes if there is no communication may be the administrators can judge the teachers based on what parents say for example. Whereas the teachers are really doing good work, and I am the one who is going to know who the teacher is, and whether she is good and how much improvement she needs. So sometimes if the administrators do not communicate with me about a teacher, and simply rely on opinions of parents or whomever, this is going to affect the teacher."

The first and second instructional supervisors at school B perceived communicating teachers' needs to administrators as critical to improving teachers' professional learning experience. Similarly, the third and fourth instructional supervisors, who are subject coordinators, would also communicate teachers' concerns and needs to their respective heads of departments. The first instructional supervisor at school B tries her best to relay school standard expectations to teachers as discussed with administrators. The second and third instructional supervisors interviewed also emphasized that as liaisons it is important for them to explain communicate instructional goals to teachers as clearly as possible as well as explaining why these goals are important. The fourth instructional supervisor at school B explained that as a liaison her own instruction as well as teachers' instruction has improved due to the fact that the head of the French department communicates instructional expectations to her; and in turn, as a coordinator, she would "convey" those expectations to teachers while working closely with them.

The participants at school B mentioned a good example of the instructional supervisors' liaison-function, the bridging meetings. They explained that teachers and instructional supervisors, coordinators and heads of department, would meet with teachers of the next grade level to look over the curriculum and identify skills that students need to master before moving up a grade level. Accordingly, teachers of both grade levels, in collaboration with the instructional supervisors, would discuss and identify teachers' professional learning needs to the administrators in an effort to facilitate teachers' requests.

***Teachers' perspectives.*** Three teachers at school A, the second, fourth and sixth, confirmed that instructional supervisors communicate teachers' needs and concerns to the administrators through evaluation meetings and that this enhances

teachers' professional learning experience. However, they did not all agree on the extent to which this is practiced in their school. The second teacher at school A explained that she feels that the "administration can obtain information from the coordinator" about her abilities as a teacher, but she felt that this is not adequately practiced by her instructional supervisor and or administrators. One teacher from the focus group at school A explained that it is detrimental to teachers when administrators fail to communicate with instructional supervisors and with the teachers involved about parents' grievances, as they feel the need to comprehend the circumstances of the issue at hand in order to resolve it. The teacher believes that instructional supervisors communicate with principals, they will form a more complete idea of the teacher's work. This perception is rationalized by the fact that instructional supervisors know the teacher's performance through regular meetings and observations and can satisfactorily convey a better description of a teacher to the administrator such as the principal.

At school B, three teachers, the first, fourth and sixth, confirmed that their instructional supervisors communicated teachers' needs and concerns to administrators and that this function enhanced teachers' professional learning experience. The sixth teacher at school B said, "the coordinator becomes a factor, I mean like a 'postman' between teachers and the head of department and with the administration because they cannot get teachers and coordinators to meet at the same time.

Other evidence was derived from document analysis in both schools. At school A, a document titled, 'Academic Activities for the Coming Academic Year 2013-2014', reveals that the supervisors gather feedback about teachers' professional learning preferences such as, courses at universities, workshops, on-line courses,

research topics (action research), book study, portfolio preparation, community service (related to education) and any other suggestion that teachers may have. The staff development officer receives and analyzes the teachers' professional learning preferences, then this information is shared with the administrators, vice-principal and principals, who in turn share the information with the heads of department in order to plan for teachers' future professional learning.

### **Fostering Trust**

All participants interviewed at both schools reported that when instructional supervisors foster trust with teachers it is promoting teachers' professional learning experience. Four functions were identified as important in fostering trust, they include: encouraging and acknowledging teachers' professional learning gains; adjusting supervision style based on teachers' personal and professional needs; being available to teachers and listening to their concerns.

In terms of encouraging and acknowledging teachers' professional learning gains, all instructional supervisors (2) at school A and most at B (2 of 4) at school B, most teachers at school A (4 of 6), and most at school B (3 of 6) mentioned this function. All (2) instructional supervisors at school A and few instructional supervisors (1 of 4) at school B reported adjusting their supervision style based on teachers' personal and professional needs. At school A, most teachers (4 of 6) and no teachers at school B (0 of 6) mentioned this function. Concerning the following function, being a leader/role model for teachers, all instructional supervisors at school A and most at school B (3 of 4), most teachers at school A (3 of 6) and most teachers at school B (5 of 6) identified this function as positively affecting teachers' professional learning. Lastly, being available to teachers and listening to their concerns was reported as promoting teachers' professional learning by all



instructional supervisors at school A, and most at school B (3 of 4), by most school A teachers (5 of 6) and by few school B teachers (1 of 6). Table 3, on page 106, represents the frequency of participants who mentioned these functions.

**Encouraging and acknowledging teachers’ professional learning gains.**

School A instructional supervisors and four of the six teachers as well as focus group participants perceived encouraging and acknowledging teachers’ professional learning gains as an effective practice that promotes teachers’ professional learning. In school B two instructional supervisors and three teachers perceived encouraging and acknowledging teachers’ professional learning gains as helping enhance teachers’ professional learning experience. All teachers in the focus group interview at school B agreed to this function and evidence from documents could corroborate this function. The first row of Table 3, below, summarizes these findings.

Table 3  
*Instructional Supervisors’ Role in Promoting Teachers’ Professional Learning: Fostering trust*

	<i>School A</i>				<i>School B</i>			
	Instructional supervisors’ (Total of 2)	Teachers (Total of 6)	Teachers in focus group (Total of 10)	Documents and records	Instructional supervisors’ (Total of 4)	Teachers’ (Total of 6)	Teachers’ focus group (Total of 3)	Documents and records
Encouraging and acknowledging teachers’ professional learning gains	✓ (2)	✓ (4)	✓	–	✓ (2)	✓ (3)	✓	✓
Adjusting supervision style based on teachers’ personal and professional needs	✓ (2)	✓ (4)	✓	–	✓ (1)	–	✓	–
Being a leader/role model for teachers	✓ (2)	✓ (4)	✓	–	✓ (3)	✓ (5)	✓	–
Being available to teachers and listening to their concerns	✓ (2)	✓ (5)	✓	–	✓ (3)	✓ (1)	✓	–

✓ : mentioned

– : not mentioned/not available

( ): Frequency of responses

Frequency of participants who identified these functions.

***Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.*** Both instructional supervisors at

school A explained that consistently encouraging teachers fosters trust which in turn promotes and facilitates teachers’ learning. The first and second instructional

supervisors at school A said that this takes place when they especially encourage teachers to participate in peer-observations and offer their own workshops to colleagues as part of their professional learning experience. The first and second instructional supervisors perceived instructional supervisor at school A and the second instructional supervisor at school A perceived that “encouraging teachers”, is an important aspect of enhancing teachers’ professional experience and that “there is no age for encouragement and motivation. The second supervisor at school A stated “When we grow in our experience, we need motivation especially when we are in a stable condition in our career.” She explained, that she reminds herself and is cognizant need encouragement on a daily basis. The second instructional supervisor also explained that other than receiving encouragement from school administrators to attend workshops, teachers are encouraged when offered incentives such as awards, medals and certificates at the completion of a professional learning challenge or “competition”.

At school B, two instructional supervisors agreed that this function positively affects teachers’ professional learning experience. The first instructional supervisor observed this function as necessary to push teachers to move out of their instructional comfort zones to refine and acquire recommended up-to-date instructional practices. She explained, “We would have discovered what potential teachers have over time, and with this knowledge we push and motivate teachers.” Moreover, the first instructional supervisor at school B suggested that appreciation could be demonstrated by acknowledging teachers’ professional learning verbally, with a discussion of a salary increase, or a promotion. The fourth instructional supervisor at school B added that when she communicates her enthusiasm to teachers, this help drive teachers to achieve their professional learning goals.

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, the second, fourth, fifth and sixth teachers agreed that the encouragement teachers receive from their supervisors positively shapes their professional learning experience. The second teacher at school A believed that while intrinsic motivation is an essential component of teachers' professional learning, receiving extrinsic motivation from instructional supervisors and school administrators would be of greater value for enhancing teachers' professional learning. Both the second and sixth teachers at school A agreed that, teachers do not receive enough or even regular extrinsic motivation to further enhance teachers' professional learning. However, the fourth teacher at school A believed that currently and in her experience thus far, her professional learning experience was already especially successful as the instructional supervisors and administrators provide teachers with incentives after completing a professional learning project. The fifth teacher also confirmed that this function positively affected her professional learning experience. Teachers in the focus group interview at school A agreed that this function motivated teachers to work harder towards achieving their professional learning goals, but they explained that not all department instructional supervisors and teachers were privileged with this experience. Also, all teachers in the focus group did interview at school A did mention that in spite of administrative support, the "workshop titles were often misleading". So teachers attend workshops with certain expectations and frequently leave discouraged. All focus group teachers recommended that instructional supervisors should thoroughly investigate appropriate professional learning training options that could be applied at school, as this would enhance their professional learning experience. No documents from school A could support this function

School B teachers, who participated in the individual and focus group interviews, agreed that verbal and sometimes written appreciation and acknowledgement of their professional learning gains, boosted their motivation and hence promoted their professional learning experience. Three teachers, interviewed individually, confirmed that receiving encouragement and acknowledgement from their instructional supervisors certainly enhances teachers' professional learning experience. The third, fourth and sixth teachers at school B mentioned that administrators and instructional supervisors continuously encouraged teachers to advance their professional learning sometimes with incentives or with opportunities to continue their professional learning by attending external trainings occurring in other educational institutions. The sixth teacher at school B said, "As teachers, the administrators have created the way for us to continue our professional learning. Every time there are professional learning opportunities outside the school, the administrators place the brochures in the teachers' lounge, and we decide which sessions we want to attend." The third and sixth teachers added that administrators' personality, "positive attitude" and manner in showing teachers' appreciation were factors that enhanced trust among colleagues and administrators.

However, school B focus group teachers raised a concern that several professional development trainings were not applicable to their school context due to classroom size and time constraints for example. Furthermore, the teachers in the focus group suggested that the instructional supervisors and administrators needed to be more particular about selecting a range of workshops that teachers could learn from and apply what was learned in school. The professional development officer at school B shared documents that support the role instructional supervisors play in promoting professional learning through helping them attend appropriate

professional learning trainings. Examples of documents were brochures from Haigazian University ‘In-Service Teacher Training Program’ March, 2011 as well as June 2012, and Brummana High School ‘Spring Professional Development Workshops’ April, 2014.

On the whole, instructional supervisors, teachers and teacher focus group participants at both schools perceived and identified encouraging and acknowledging teachers’ professional learning gains as beneficial to teachers’ professional learning experience. Unlike school B, at school A the researcher did not locate any evidence in the documents that support this role.

**Adjusting supervision style based on teachers’ personal and professional needs.** The frequency of responses for adjusting supervision style based on teachers’ personal and professional needs, indicated differences between the schools. At school A, two instructional supervisors and four teachers talked about this function. At school B, however, only one instructional supervisor discussed this function and none of the teachers referred to it. The second row of Table 3, on page 106, depicts the frequency of participant responses for this function for both schools.

In addition to encouraging and acknowledging teachers’ personal and professional needs, instructional supervisors adjusted their supervision style to teachers’ needs and this led to gaining teachers’ trust which they saw as leading to promote teachers’ professional learning. At both schools, the participants interviewed individually and in the focus groups, instructional supervisors and teachers, perceived this practice as promoting teachers’ professional learning experience. By adjusting supervision style, instructional supervisors would modify the way they supervise each individual teacher or group of teachers based on factors such as age,

experience, personality, and individual or group professional learning preferences or needs.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, both instructional supervisors recognized the need to adjust their supervision style to meet each individual teacher's personal and professional needs. The first instructional supervisor at school A explained how she adjusted her supervision style when working with fresh graduates as compared to the approach she follows with more experienced teachers:

“There are teachers who are older and have strategies that are tried and true and it is hard for them to shift from what they know to another strategy. Or if a new concept is introduced to them, for example regarding rules or classroom management, they usually have their way like in the old days and you will find it challenging to change such teachers. The approach should be gradual- bit by bit. They try however- definitely not like new teachers who are fresh graduates. Such a teacher, a fresh graduate, I would give her all I have and this is easier for me as it is like molding her as she still needs help. Now those who are older and more experienced do have their own point of view with regards to specific instructional topics. Most of the times we respect their ideas. We take them, their perspectives, into consideration and apply them, and avoid making them feel that something is mandatory for them.”

Similarly, the second instructional supervisor at school A explained- “I am supervising teachers who have been teaching for seventeen years and others who are first year teachers, so I really can find difference in the way to approach each one and help them in having an effective professional learning experience.”

Also, the first instructional supervisor at school A added that it is important to take into consideration “a teacher’s personality” when supervising him or her. She added. “Some teachers are a bit stiff or anxious. So I cannot begin going through the post-observation notes and list the negative points one after another. Instead I would ask ‘There is this that happened. Why did this happen?’” More importantly the first instructional supervisor at school A emphasized that she would begin the post-observation process and any supervision process with “positive feedback” and that she would “communicate all information in a diplomatic way”. In the worst-case scenario, if a teacher’s performance is less than satisfactory, the instructional supervisor would “be honest” but first and foremost, she would highlight positive aspects of a teacher’s performance. The second instructional supervisor at school A agrees and she revealed that she adjusts her supervision style in the way she treats each teacher- “each teacher has a way, has a key” and “what applies with this teacher might not apply with another teacher, but ultimately they have to know that there is a task to complete.”

At school B, the first instructional supervisor described that she considers teachers’ backgrounds when planning for teachers’ professional learning, she said:

“ I must have in my mind the teacher’s base profile, level of knowledge, skills and abilities that he originally has- in terms of what diploma does he have, what experience he has, so that I have something to work with. I cannot work in vacuum without knowing the teacher’s background. I need to get started with the professional learning plan and from something ‘concrete’.”

She also specified that during the post-observation conference, it is important to approach each teacher with ‘positive feedback’ and deliver other feedback in a ‘professional manner’ to help teachers’ improve. While the first instructional

supervisor at school B did not indicate specific speech patterns or behaviors used to adjust her supervision style with different teachers, she clarified that with every teacher she would “Advise him to read books that can help in certain disciplines and advise him on other things.” also ‘advising the teacher to attend a language course’ as an extension of this function that serves to enhance the teacher’s professional learning. However, if she discovers that a group of teachers have similar professional learning needs she sets up common professional trainings for the group.

*Teachers’ perspectives.* At school A, the third, fourth, fifth and sixth teachers agreed that teachers’ professional learning needs were more adequately met as their supervisors adopted different supervision styles and strategies. In general the teachers described instructional supervisors as readjusting their supervisory approach when teachers were tense or stressed which facilitated teachers’ professional learning experience. All focus group participants at school A agreed that fostering trust by adjusting the supervision style to teachers’ needs enhances their professional learning experience. However, they pointed at a prevailing challenge they face stating that instructional supervisors need to read teachers’ professional learning portfolios in order to better meet their professional learning needs. One of the teachers in focus group interview said,

“They do not match our professional learning needs with our portfolio. If they read our portfolio and our appraisal form they would know for example, we do not have problems in that instructional area that other teachers might be lacking- and they might benefit from this workshop.”

The teacher in the focus group added:

“If for example, a teacher excels in classroom management while twenty others are suffering and have problems with classroom management. So it is a serious



problem when they create a workshop in the school for classroom management and making this specific teacher attend it- it isn't effective. They should put people who really need to attend this workshop. This makes the workshop more important and effective so we do not feel we are being punished for one whole day sitting and listening to lecturing.”

This focus group participant suggested that instructional supervisors and administrators need to be more attuned to teachers' needs by reading teachers' portfolios, appraisals as well as directly ask teachers what professional skills they would like to develop if they are to benefit and learn from these sessions.

Similarly, at school B, during the focus group interview adjusting supervisory practice to teachers needs was recognized as positively impacting teachers' professional learning experience. One teacher in the focus group interview at school B explained that while instructional supervisors adjust their supervision style to meet teacher individual and group professional learning needs, their professional learning experience is frequently unsatisfactory. She added that teachers approach instructional supervisors and administrators and “ always ask for ideas that can be applied in our school. It is very difficult to find something that is adaptable to our school because we teach three languages and we have limited time in the younger classes- so we need something that is adaptable to our school.”

The other two teachers in the focus group at school B agreed that instructional supervisors needed to pay more attention towards meeting teachers' individual professional learning needs and selecting workshops that teachers could benefit from and hence making it more likely for teachers to implement newly learned instructional practices. It is in this regard that the teachers desired instructional supervisors to adapt their supervision approach and style.

On the other hand, all three teachers believed that unless instructional supervisors adjust their supervision style by first truly understanding every teacher's professional needs and supervising the teachers accordingly, teachers will not be learning. They agreed that "there are times where the in-service, especially the ones the school prepares, are not suitable for all teachers. Because as individuals we have already been to separate workshops, so sometimes this is not taken into consideration- that we have attended certain off-campus workshops and we end up having repeated training." They added that when instructional supervisors and administrators did not take into account every teacher's professional learning accomplishments and areas that need further development; the mandatory in-service training teachers have to attend will cause them to feel 'bored' and 'slightly disconnected'.

Overall, all instructional supervisors and most teachers at school A admitted that teachers' professional learning is enhanced when instructional supervisors adjust their supervision style based on teachers' personal and professional learning needs. At school B, one instructional supervisor perceived this function and no teachers interviewed individually at school B spoke of this. Focus group teachers interviewed at both schools agreed to the importance of this practice yet shared many concerns related to its limited application at their school.

**Being a leader/role model for teachers.** Based on the results, essential to gaining teachers' trust as a way to promote teachers' professional learning, is an instructional leader's ability to influence through being a role model for teachers. Instructional supervisors and teachers identified instructional supervisor behaviors such as modeling instructional practices, participating in own professional learning as enhancing teachers' professional learning experience. Teachers who identified this

function all perceived their instructional supervisors' favorable leadership qualities as significantly affecting their perception of advancing professionally. Generally, participants at both schools identified this function at about the same frequency. In school A, two instructional supervisors and four teachers discussed this function. At school B, three instructional supervisors and five teachers mentioned this function. The third row of Table 3, on page 106, depicts the results of both schools for this function.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, the first instructional supervisor clarified that she prefers to lead teachers by “respecting teachers’ ideas and taking those ideas into consideration” and refrain from “making teachers feel that something is mandatory for them”. According to her, this form of leading helps her gain teachers’ trust and facilitate the process of introducing teachers to new instructional practices because she has already built trusting relationships with teachers.

The second instructional supervisor interviewed individually at school A perceived exercising ‘good leadership’ as an essential factor in promoting teachers’ professional learning. She is aware that in the hierarchy in the school she is not the highest level of ‘authority’ but believes that in her role as instructional supervisor being a leader to teachers plays an important role to support teachers’ professional advancements. She explained, “The main key in a school- in a good quality school is the leadership. Of course I’m not the highest level of authority.... I don’t make the main decision you know. I do have a decision in my department.” She explains that as a “leader” of teachers she does not feel comfortable “forcing teachers to do anything unless they discuss it” first. She does not believe in being “bossy” with teachers as that form of leading teachers ‘is not going to work’; she would rather say,

“Let us try. Let us give it a try” as a way to coax teachers to advance professionally beyond their comfort zones.

At school B, the first and second instructional supervisors believed that their role as leader and or role model positively affects teachers’ professional learning experience. The first instructional supervisor at school B stresses on safeguarding the “the ethics of the school.” Similarly, the second instructional supervisor interviewed at school B perceived his role as instructional supervisor as being a role model and leader to teachers by: being dedicated, which is his “nature”, as well as fostering his own professional learning. He believes that by continuing his own professional learning this inspires teachers to also pursue their professional learning. He explained, “I’m a teacher, so that’s why I think what I’m doing I mean in my relationship with the teachers in my presence near them is important- I’m speaking not in a very ideal sense- but as I am a teacher, that’s why I’m fair with everyone.”

As the leader of the department, the second instructional supervisor at school B noted that he is aware that teachers view him as a role model and that in that capacity he needs to model how he continues his professional learning. He explained, “And I’m still learning with them. I mean they look at me ‘If Mr. W is still learning that means we have to continue as well’ I mean I show them this that’s why. I mean there isn’t a workshop that I miss.”

As for the fourth instructional supervisor at school B, she expressed that as a coordinator she doesn’t perceive herself as the main leader for teachers, however she believes that her role is to model expected instructional standards to the best of her abilities.

***Teachers’ perspectives.*** The teachers interviewed individually at school A perceived instructional supervisors’ as role models and leaders who are capable of

positively influencing teachers' professional learning experience. Four teachers at school A discussed this role- the first, third, fifth and sixth teachers.

The first teacher at school A indicated that the instructional supervisor's influence is evident in that teachers are not made to feel anxious but are rather prepared to learn what can be done to meet a certain instructional objectives. Hence, the instructional supervisor gives teachers the necessary reassurance to do that and allows teachers to take instructional risks.

The teachers at school A agreed that supportive, understanding and caring leadership approaches enhances their professional learning if adopted by their instructional supervisor. The third teacher at school A explained that she looks up to the instructional supervisor for inspiration- as an example of good instructional practice- she refers to the instructional supervisor as a "leader" and as being capable of affecting how teachers experience professional learning prospects. Furthermore, she indicated that because her instructional supervisor is flexible with teachers she perceives that as a desirable trait of a role model. The teacher expressed that she feels inspired to improve her practice because she looks up to her instructional supervisor as a role model. She explained, "The nice part is that the coordinator is also teaching, she knows how sometimes we don't have to stick to the plan. She knows that sometimes we have to change according to our students' needs, and she doesn't come and say. 'Oh why didn't you apply this? I told you to apply it.' No, if you tell her that 'I changed it.' It's okay."

The fifth teacher at school A agreed with this perspective. She admires the way her instructional supervisor communicates advice and other ideas to teachers. She stated, "Yes, the coordinator plays a significant role in my professional learning. She has her own opinions, and she's influential. She encourages and motivates teachers."

The fifth teacher believes that her instructional supervisor's character traits such as having "a strong personality", "patience", "the ability to follow-up", "ability to collaborate", and "effective communication skills" positively affect teachers' professional learning experience.

Teacher participants of the focus group interview at school A agreed that coordinators were perceived as leaders/role models and that in that role they are considered influential in enhancing teachers' professional learning experience. Beyond this, none of the teachers added any further comments. No evidence of this role was revealed in the documents received from school A.

The five teachers at school B referred to the leader/role model function as positively affecting their professional learning experience. For this function, the first, second, third, fourth and sixth teachers at school B discussed the extent of instructional supervisors' influence on their professional learning experience.

The first teacher interviewed at school B mentioned that as a role model, her instructional supervisor's experience in elementary teaching coupled with good communication skills and certain personality traits affect her professional learning experience. The teacher said that she looks up to her instructional supervisor because of her elementary teaching experience- because "she really understands and she has experience in teaching" and because "she is a member of the Academic Board".

The second teacher interviewed at school B perceived the instructional supervisor's dedication, experience, communication abilities and some personality traits as leadership qualities affecting her professional learning experience. In describing her instructional supervisor, the second teacher said, "Well our coordinator she's a great lady and she's a hard worker." She also believes that as leaders and role models of teachers, instructional supervisors must remain up-to-date

and more engaged in instructional matters. She implied that it makes a difference to her that the instructional supervisor is still teaching at the elementary level, and has enough experience, in order to better influence teachers as a credible leader. From her response, her strong belief is apparent in the importance of expertise as the basis for the instructional supervisor's leadership and ability to influence teachers.

The third teacher at school B described her instructional supervisor as "open" to teachers' opinions and suggestions as well as "being very professional". She agrees with the fourth teacher at school B in that her professional growth is improving because she looks up to her instructional supervisor as her leader and learns from his experience in instruction and educational planning.

The sixth teacher interviewed at school B also perceived the instructional supervisor as a role model to teachers. She stated, "She is a role model for me, because she helps us a lot, a lot. Whenever we ask of her.... if sometimes we cannot convey a certain objective properly, we go up to her office, we sit for two or three hours. She tries ways; she does research. She helps us a lot in small details. She's always present." She explained that teachers' perception of their professional learning experience was affected by their instructional supervisor's level of experience, communication abilities, as well as personality.

The teacher members of the focus group interviewed at school B supported the idea that instructional supervisors must be dedicated, demonstrate instructional practices to teachers and be role models to teachers. No evidence in any of the documents provided to the researcher from school B indicates this instructional supervisory function.

**Being available to teachers and listening to their concerns.** Both teachers and instructional supervisors at both schools explained that being available to

teachers and also to listen to their concerns, markedly affected teachers' professional learning experience. Teachers who were interviewed individually described instructional supervisors as supportive when they were able to or intended to be available to listen to teachers. At school A, two instructional supervisors and five teachers interviewed individually perceived this function as promoting teachers' professional learning. At school B, three instructional supervisors being available to teachers and listening to their concerns as advancing teachers' professional learning and one teacher at school B cited this role as adversely affecting her professional learning experience. The fourth row of Table 3, on page 106, represents the frequency of responses at both schools.

***Instructional supervisors' perspectives.*** At school A, both instructional supervisors consider listening to teachers' opinions as an important function that definitely affects teachers' professional learning experience. The first instructional supervisor at school A makes certain that teachers feel respected, engaged, and valued while intently listening to their concerns. While the first instructional supervisor listens to teachers concerns and takes much of what they say into consideration for application, there are instances where she would have to overrule teachers' requests for students' welfare, the curriculum or school rules and regulations. The following quote highlights the first instructional supervisor's perspective:

“Teachers do feel free to say what they want. And I stay with them until either one of us is able to convince the other about their point of view. So I can hold my breath quite long- I'm quite patient. But what I do not do is tell them that this is wrong and this is the way it should happen full stop. No I have to listen. I mean you are teaching children. You are teaching a human being. There is not



one teaching approach that works well one hundred percent especially with each and every student.”

Similarly, the second instructional supervisor at school A said, “I find that taking the teachers’ opinions in anything is important. I cannot force her to do any task unless we discuss it.” She also gives teachers permission to feel comfortable to vent to her, especially when they are under pressure and “over react” when facing “new tasks” and in turn tries to “simplify things for teachers”.

At school B, the first, second and fourth instructional supervisors agreed that being available to teachers and working closely with them helps her set up professional learning experiences that more closely match teachers’ needs. The first instructional supervisor at school B held that being available during workshops was valuable to understanding how teachers perceive their professional learning experience. The second instructional supervisor at school B emphasized that his “presence” near teachers is the best way he can help teachers’ professional learning as it helps build healthy and positive relationships with teachers. He stated, “Mainly, this is my job. I mean meetings. I’m here, available all day for teachers.” He added, “I mean at any time when a teacher calls me, I’m here for them. So this is very important I think. I mean at any time, any day I’m here, not just because, but also because I am dedicated. I don’t know how else to enhance teacher’s professional learning.”

***Teachers’ perspectives.*** The first, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth teachers interviewed individually at school A all agreed that instructional matters positively impacting teachers’ professional learning. The first teacher at school A said that the coordinator is regularly available to “give us ideas”, “prepare activities for us to develop” and implement. Sometimes when the teacher walks into “the computer lab

and something is presented to us by her”. According to the third teacher, her instructional supervisor fulfills this function by regularly keeping teachers up-to-date with instructional practices and strategies. She stated that “whatever we want, she’s there, she gives us new strategies, for example, I can say the strategies that we are applying now with the students- like the numbered hats, the team-pair-solo, think-pair-share strategies. I mean she taught us those things; she’s helping us and keeping us up to date with the newest strategies to apply with our students.” She added, “She’s always there for us. She doesn’t leave us.” The fourth teacher at school A indicated that her instructional supervisor makes herself available to teachers by “teaching” teachers at the computer lab to use and apply computer softwares, such as Movie Maker, later to be implemented in class for instructional purposes. She explained, “So she didn’t leave us to work alone and not supervise our work or withhold feedback. She let us know whether or not we are on the right track or not.” Similarly, the fifth teacher at school A also expressed that the “presence” of the coordinator among teachers is effective because teachers “examine what they’ve accomplished so far”, where they “need to exert more effort”, and what they “need to focus more on” in terms of goals. The teacher focus group members at school A agreed that instructional supervisors’ availability to teachers enhance teachers’ professional learning experience. However, one teacher raised a concern and explained that working closely with strongly opinionated and inflexible instructional supervisors adversely affects teachers’ professional learning. This focus group teacher at school A said:

“I mean if you believe that a child is at ease, and able to get up from their seat and move in the classroom and this rule, the imposed seating arrangement for example; and you’re not supposed to have them sit the way you see fit, and the

coordinators call for you again to tell you how the students should sit...but inside, nothing is going to change with you- you're not going to advance professionally because you are not convinced and you're not convinced of the system that they are implementing.”

At school B, the second teacher agrees that instructional supervisors availability to teachers significantly improves teachers' professional learning experience; however, she believed that her instructional supervisor did not make herself available enough to teachers. She explained, “ I think she should be available if I have a question, if I need someone to help me out with something, she should be there for me. But since she has so many things to do, she's not always available.” At school B the teachers in the focus group agreed that instructional supervisors being available and working closely with teachers enhances teachers' professional learning experience.

No evidence from documents at either school suggests the extent to which instructional supervisors are available to teachers during other hours of the school week on a one-to one basis or otherwise, which might indicate that the formal job responsibilities of the coordinator does not stress this function of the role.

### **Encouraging Participation in Decision-Making**

The third role, encouraging participation in decision-making, includes the following two functions: consulting with teachers; and sharing in decision-making. All instructional supervisors at school A (2) and most at school B (3 of 4) reported consulting with teachers as enhancing teachers' professional learning. No teachers at school A (0 of 6) and most teachers at school B (5 of 6) reported this function. Concerning sharing in decision-making, all instructional supervisors and all teacher

at both schools cited that this function as impacting teachers’ professional learning.

Table 4, on page 125, shows the frequency of responses for these functions.

**Consulting with teachers.** Instructional supervisors at schools A and B discussed that they needed to consult with teachers regarding instructional matters as well as their professional learning preferences. Teachers at school B also pointed out that instructional supervisors’ consulted with them to reach certain decisions that affected their instructional work and often times professional learning opportunities offered- no teachers at school A explicitly spoke about this function. Below, the first row of Table 4, below, shows the frequency of responses for this function.

Table 4  
*Instructional Supervisors’ Role in Promoting Teachers’ Professional Learning: Encouraging participation in decision making*

	<i>School A</i>				<i>School B</i>			
	Instructional supervisors’ (Total of 2)	Teachers (Total of 6)	Teachers in focus group (Total of 10)	Documents and records	Instructional supervisors’ (Total of 4)	Teachers’ (Total of 6)	Teachers’ focus group (Total of 3)	Documents and records
Consulting with teachers	✓ (2)	–	✓	✓	✓ (3)	✓ (5)	✓	✓
Sharing in decision-making	✓ (2)	✓ (6)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (6)	✓	–

✓ : mentioned

– : not mentioned/not available

( ):Frequency of responses

Frequency of participants who identified these functions.

**Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.** At school A, instructional supervisors perceived discussing instructional matters with teachers as facilitating their instructional work by remaining up-to-date with important instructional matters as well as aiding the decision-making process. The first and second instructional supervisors maintained that consulting with teachers benefitted both involved- instructional supervisors and teachers. The first instructional supervisor perceived needing to consult with teachers regularly in order to catch up with the ‘on goings’ in classrooms due to the large volume of work she faces on a daily basis; she said, “I

cannot force a teacher to do any task unless we discuss it first.” If she feels that she and the teachers cannot come up with solutions, she then consults with other educators in school. She described the following:

“I cannot tell you now every single detail that happens in class I am fully aware about. For sure no- I cannot know all the details. However, during the coordination sessions I always ask teachers ‘What problems do you face? Why didn’t this student achieve good results?’ or ‘Why’ for example ‘is this student always sad, or why does he have behavioral problems?’ We try, them and I, together to find solutions.”

What’s more, the first instructional supervisor explained that she consults with teachers “at the beginning of the academic year” and “asks teachers to identify their strengths” in order to set up professional learning opportunities such as workshops within her department.

The second instructional supervisor at school A finds that teachers professional learning experience is enhanced with this function as they participate in sharing experiences with her and their colleagues. She explains, “We have to share together, we are really human beings by the end and if I have a PhD, this doesn’t mean that I have all the knowledge. Just the opposite, I have to learn more and I can learn from you. I can learn from the teacher whomever she is.”

At school B, the first, second and fourth instructional supervisors indicated that consulting with teachers helped them: cater to teachers’ professional learning needs; plan better learning opportunities for teachers; manage instructional work; and decide on appropriate resources for teachers. The instructional supervisors at school B perceived that when teachers collaborated with instructional supervisors and

contributed to the decision-making process, their professional learning experiences were positively affected.

The first instructional supervisor at school B found it effective to consult with teachers about the quality and content of workshops and accordingly she would plan professional learning opportunities that more closely serve teachers' needs. The fourth instructional supervisor at school B indicated she needs to consult with teachers about instructional resources they need. In turn she would consult with and the head of department to ensure that teachers receive the resources they need to improve and facilitate their instruction. She said, "Yes I learn about the resources teachers need", and added "I always need a second opinion to support me in such issues such as acquiring and distributing resources." 'Second opinion' refers to the coordinator consulting with the head of department.

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, none of the teachers in the individual interview mentioned this function, yet, teachers in the focus group agreed that instructional supervisors did consult with teachers regarding certain instructional decisions and that this positively affected their professional learning experience. Two documents provided by the instructional supervisors at school A point at the practice of this function. The first instructional supervisor used a document called "Exchange of Summer Experiences" when consulting with teachers about: workshops they have attended, how they preferred to apply certain instructional strategies in their classrooms, and what instructional materials or resources they would need to facilitate their teaching. The second instructional supervisor resorted to the "Textbook Evaluation Form" when consulting with teachers about new textbooks they might need for the coming academic year.

At school B, five teachers confirmed that consulting with instructional supervisors enhances their professional learning experience. The first teacher at school B perceived that consulting with instructional supervisors helps her achieve her instructional goals. The third, fourth, and sixth teachers at school B explained the content of the consultations with their respective instructional supervisors. The fourth teacher explained, “He asks us ‘What are the [training] sessions you are interested in?’ and what we feel our needs are. I mean starting from our needs, we suggested what topics we would like to learn about in our [training] session.” She added that after consulting with instructional supervisors about needed resources, “administrators provide them [resources] to us”. Similarly, the sixth teacher noted that instructional supervisors did their best to meet teachers’ need for resources as well as professional learning opportunities. While the second teacher agreed that this function is generally effective, she said that in certain instances, consultations with instructional supervisors and administration is not always fruitful in all areas of her professional learning experience. One such area is the R.A.S. [Results Analysis Sheet] for students’ tests. Teachers complete this document after each test, submit it to their instructional supervisor, and provide students with remedial work when necessary. The second teacher found this tedious and time consuming and approached her instructional supervisor and administrators about this, she said, “I have talked with so many persons in the school, but up till now they haven’t made any adjustments. I mean they have a different perspective.”

The teachers in the focus group at school B agreed that being consulted enhances their professional learning experience. One document from school B supports the practice of this function. The document asks teachers to ‘report and evaluate the content of the workshop(s)’ they have attended, ‘submit a copy of

handouts and certificate(s) received' to the administration, and encourages teachers to 'communicate all workshop activities to all members in their department'.

**Sharing in decision-making.** For this second function, the participants discussed how sharing in decision-making- with teachers and other administrators- positively enhances teachers' professional learning experience. All instructional supervisors at both schools identified this function, and six teachers at school A and six teachers at school B mentioned this function. The second row of Table 4, on page 125, shows the frequency of responses for this function.

***Instructional supervisors' perspectives.*** At school A, the first and the second instructional supervisors agreed that sharing in decision-making with teachers can positively affect teachers' professional learning experience.

While the second instructional supervisor at school A agreed that shared decision-making is effective, she pointed that there are some limitations to the extent of sharing in decision-making with teachers.

At school B, all four instructional supervisors agreed that teachers' professional learning experience is enhanced when teachers participated in shared decision-making. The first instructional supervisor explained that teachers participated in shared decision-making amongst themselves, and after reaching a decision they informed their instructional supervisors, usually the head of department, for her input and approval. The second instructional supervisor perceived teachers' involvement in decisions pertaining to their own professional learning as effective. He explained, "The teachers and I we select the type of workshops that they can attend." The third instructional supervisor at school B explained that teachers participate in shared decision-making when preparing tests. When a better version of the test is ready, teachers send a copy to the head of



department for approval, revisions and corrections before it is sent to the administration. The third instructional supervisor also said teachers constantly exchange instructional ideas and reach a consensus about certain decisions including the selection of instructional resources and professional learning practices, he said, “Always we take the decision together as a team, and then we ask the consent of the administration- If teachers are willing to go for peer-learning regularly at school.” He explained that shared decision-making is regularly practiced in “department meetings”- “the teacher will give her/his opinion about the topic of discussion, we, in the end we take the best ideas from all the teachers” and he added, “We work as a team usually not individual work. I mean the teacher prepares planning, lesson planning, and that’s it we all follow. We give remarks in relation to planning- all together, enhance to achieve better results in it.” He also mentioned that teachers discuss and agree on which “math manipulatives” are useful ‘to teach children abstract concepts’. However, she explained that shared decision-making was not always easy, as teachers did not always see eye-to-eye, “If there is a conflict between two teachers they will try to settle the conflict. We try to manage what doesn’t seem workable [and exclude it from] the final decision.” The fourth instructional supervisor at school B indicated that shared decision-making was an integral part of teachers’ day-to-day work such as shared lesson planning, bridging meetings between two grade levels, preparing project based learning plans as well as the type of professional learning teachers believed was best for them individually and as a department. She said, “Now my role is not exactly me always giving opinions. We work all together” adding, “I mean I am not the one who imposed my opinion- there’s no such thing- no imposing of opinions. I mean we want to all agree together

about all decisions that result from working together. There's always a discussion among us- head of department, coordinator and teachers.”

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, all teachers agreed that participation in shared decision-making critically affects their professional learning. The six teachers perceived shared decision-making a common practice during the weekly coordination meetings with their respective instructional supervisors. The first, second, fourth, and sixth teachers at school A explained that teachers and the coordinator meet during this coordination session to discuss and agree on certain instructional matters together- such as deciding on a unified lesson plan for all teachers to adopt- as they believed that exchanging ideas and experiences with her peers during decision-making process enhances their professional learning. The third teacher explained that shared decision-making also happens after teachers have attended workshops. She said, “Usually when we attend a workshop, when we come back, we share the ideas and decide if they can be implemented.” The fifth teacher explained shared decision-making positively affects teachers' professional learning because “we want to succeed”, “we don't think that ‘I want to succeed’ - no, you need to think in terms of a phase in order to succeed to benefit students. If they succeed, we succeed in the end.” The focus group teachers at school A confirmed that their professional learning experience benefitted greatly when teachers participated in shared decision-making with their peers and instructional supervisors. No evidence of this function were evident in any of the school A documents.

At school B, all six teachers suggested that shared decision-making positively affects their professional learning experience. The six teachers at school B all claimed that shared decision-making is an integral part of weekly department meetings where instructional supervisors, coordinators and sometimes heads of

departments, and teachers would discuss and decide on matters such as lesson plans, tests, project-based learning projects, books/resources, as well as the integration and application of instructional practices learned through in-service and external professional development. The first, second and fourth teachers especially highlighted shared decision-making is important when planning project-based learning projects such as the V.C.T. [Virtual Classroom Tool] - introduced to instructional supervisors and teachers by external trainers. The first teacher said that throughout the school year teachers and instructional supervisors “will continue” to meet “all together” to work on this common project. The second said that she is “learning something new” while deciding on tasks and the work to be done for a common project. The third teacher agreed that the process of discussing and deciding on books for instruction is a learning process. The fifth teacher said the following about shared decision-making after attending workshops: “The very same things that I had learned [from the workshop] will be presented in the department” and teachers and instructional supervisors would discuss which instructional strategies to adopt, modify and implement. The teachers in the focus group at school B all confirmed that shared decision-making is an essential part of their professional learning experience. The second teacher in the focus group pointed out that shared decision-making was not always ‘smooth sailing’ because there are differences in opinions among teachers and instructional supervisors during the decision-making process. No evidence in the documents gathered from school B provided additional evidence on the practice of this function.

### **Supporting Teachers’ Instructional Practices**

The fourth role, supporting teachers’ instructional practices, consists of three functions: helping teachers manage their time to focus on instructional work; guiding



**Helping teachers manage their time to focus on instructional work.**

Helping teachers manage their time to focus on instructional work is a function that instructional supervisors and teachers discussed as necessary and helpful in facilitating their instructional work as well as their professional learning experience. All instructional supervisors at both schools mentioned this function. Two teachers at school A and five teachers at school B discussed this function. The first row of Table 5, on page 133, represents the frequency of responses for this function.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, the first and second instructional supervisors believe that helping teachers manage their time is essential to help them focus on their instructional work and accommodate new professional learning experiences. Both instructional supervisors explained at school A explained that they help teachers manage their time during the weekly department meetings and any other opportunities when they meet with teachers. The first instructional supervisor at school A said, "If I want to clarify to teachers how their work can be effective, ...I am transferring everything based on experience." The second instructional supervisor at school A explained, "Sometimes maybe there is a deadline for our work. I always help them to organize themselves." She explained that teachers "have a big teaching load" and "have lots of tasks to do and teach". She added "My role as a coordinator is that I have to be effective with helping them organize their time because it is really challenging for them."

At school B, the four instructional supervisors revealed that helping teachers manage their time to focus on instructional work occurs routinely during weekly department meetings, upon reviewing progress in the syllabus, and with teachers individually or in groups when necessary. All instructional supervisors at school B indicated that this function further assists teachers in managing instructional work as

well as attending to their professional learning obligations. With respect to helping teachers complete instructional objectives before approaching exam dates, the first instructional supervisor explained that it is necessary to help teachers “set a plan to teach” and “make sure that all of us [teachers] are able to succeed and complete our work in class before we give it [exam] to students.” She also added that what helps teachers more likely to adhere to deadlines is the fact that teachers must send their planning on the school portal which she has access to- so she knows which teachers completed their work and what time they submitted it. Due to the design of this system, teachers are encouraged to plan ahead to complete the syllabus on time. The first instructional supervisor added that when teachers struggle managing their time especially when there are extra activities, she visits classrooms and questions, “If it [preparations] is going to delay my syllabus, is it beneficial to the children? How and where?” Based on her assessment of teachers’ progress in the syllabus, the instructional supervisor recommends a specific timeline for the activity so that teachers can catch up to any delays in the syllabus. The second instructional supervisor at school B implied that he helps teachers manage their time by ensuring, as best as possible, that all teachers in his department complete all school work, planning and corrections, at school, so that the teachers can unwind and attend to their personal lives after school hours. The third instructional supervisor suggested that as a coordinator he and the head of department help teachers manage their planning time by reducing the time needed to plan lessons. Every week it is a teacher’s turn to assume that responsibility for planning the weekly lesson plans. The instructional supervisor believes that this form of planning is efficient and that it “enhances professionalism” because teachers are encouraged to collaborate while the work was distributed and rotated among teachers. The fourth instructional supervisor

also explained that she helps teachers manage their time efficiently to meet syllabus deadlines by inviting them to question if “ the amount of content that’s delivered to students is too much, for example, for one day” or if “ a certain classroom activity is applicable or if it will take more time.”

*Teachers’ perspectives.* At school A, the fifth and sixth teachers confirmed that when instructional supervisors help teachers manage their time to focus on instructional work, this promotes their professional learning experience. The fifth teacher noted that supervisors help teachers with time management by providing them with tools to manage challenging student cases. The sixth teacher explained that the coordinator’s leadership in the department helps teachers “to manage time and planning.” All the teachers in the focus group at school A agreed that when instructional supervisors fulfill this function it positively impacts their professional learning. Three documents that instructional supervisors share with teachers support this function. The first document ‘Classroom Management’ provides teachers with a behavioral chart to keep students on task, which enables teachers to more likely meet syllabus deadlines. The second document ‘Controlling the Class’ provides teachers with classroom tips and strategies to implement with students to ensure that teachers and students work effectively and efficiently. The third document, ‘The Organized Teacher’, informs teachers which certain organizational and time management skills and tools are required to become efficient at work.

At school B, five teachers suggested that their instructional supervisors helped teachers become more efficient and organized with instructional work, which is beneficial to their professional learning experience. The first, second and fourth teachers at school B said that instructional supervisors help them become more efficient and organized at work by ensuring that all teachers become “computer

literate.” The first teacher asserted, “We benefitted a lot in terms of time, in organization. There’s no need to write grades- especially Excel- with grades we no longer use the calculator. They created a program that immediately calculates the grade averages. We don’t have to do them.” The teacher added, “The computer facilitated out work. We now know new techniques.” The fourth teacher especially highlighted that using the computer softwares and the Internet allowed teachers to complete and share instructional work as well as regularly communicate with their peers and instructional supervisors. Furthermore, the first, second, third, fourth and sixth teachers at school B agreed that their instructional supervisors help them manage their time and organize their instructional work mostly during the weekly department meetings whereby instructional supervisors keep teachers on track with lesson plan quality and deadlines via the school portal; and review and reduce the syllabus content to facilitate teachers’ instructional work. No evidence in any school B documents portrays this function.

**Guiding teachers through regular follow-up.** Two instructional supervisors at school A and three instructional supervisors at school B noted that guiding teachers through maintaining regular follow-up enhance teachers’ professional learning experience. Five teachers at school A and five teachers at school B agreed that this function positively affects their professional learning experience. The second row of Table 5, on page 133, depicts the frequency of responses for this function.

***Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.*** At school A, both instructional supervisors reported that their ability to guide and support teachers through regular follow-up positively affects teachers’ professional learning. The first instructional supervisor explained that effective guidance is “To what extent I can offer them



[teachers] ideas. If there are ideas I learned about as I am reading, then I have to give them all the information [knowledge] one hundred percent because I am introducing something new to them”, she added that if the instructional practices are well-known and usually practiced “then it is a matter of teachers adding to what is already known about these strategies in terms of introducing modifications to suit the needs of students depending on their age and social circumstance.” She further explained that she “furnishes teachers with all details” if instructional practices are new, but if an instructional practice is no longer effective she then gives them alternatives. If teachers are intimidated implementing a certain instructional activity, she would step in and offer to help in any way she can. The second instructional supervisor said, “I always help them to organize themselves” and “try to simplify their work.” She added that she would offer teachers help with specific lessons for example by supporting the teacher perform science experiments by demonstrating the entire lesson and giving the teacher a chance to observe what can be done in her class with her students.

At school B, all four instructional supervisors confirmed that guiding, and supporting teachers through regular follow-up plays a crucial role in advancing teachers’ professional learning. The first instructional supervisor emphasized that through regular follow-up, she would offer support to individual teachers through one-to-one guidance, and to a group of teachers with common professional learning needs in the form of a department afternoon session or a pre-arranged workshop presented by an off-campus trainer. Furthermore, she would “advise” a teacher “to attend language classes”, “read books that can help him in certain things [instructional practices]” so that the teacher could enhance their content knowledge. Similarly, at school B the second, third and fourth instructional supervisors,

described similar examples. Also, the first, third and fourth instructional supervisors explained that they support and guide teachers' "ideas" related to instruction by jointly developing and refining instructional plans so that these proposed "ideas" could be applied. The first and second instructional supervisors indicated agreement to this aspect.

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, all six teachers agreed that their instructional supervisors' guidance and support through regular follow-up enhances their professional learning experience. The first teacher suggested that regular follow-up from her instructional supervisor benefits the teachers in the department. She said, "Sometimes our coordinator follows-up a specific instructional topic and draws our attention to new activities that we can apply in the classroom"; she added, "The coordinator gives us ideas as well. So she also prepares an activity for us to do [implement] in the computer lab." The second teacher agrees to this view saying, "I am really lucky to have my coordinator. She is benefitting me a lot." The third teacher described her instructional supervisor as helping her advance in her professional learning through the regular guidance and that she has learned new instructional strategies over the years at the school. The fourth teacher instructional supervisor at school A explained that during instructional work and professional learning activities the instructional supervisor "would advise us [teachers]", and "she advises us on trying to find new activities, [as] maybe there's something interesting". The fifth teacher reported that her instructional supervisor provides teachers a variety of instructional options. The sixth teacher's instructional supervisor's guidance was described as being "helpful" and 'exceeding' the teacher's expectations. The focus group teachers at school A confirmed that receiving guidance and support from their instructional supervisors through regular follow up promoted their professional

learning experience. One school A document titled “Memo to Teachers from Coordinator” indicates recommendations and guidelines for teachers to adopt in relation to: effective weekly planning, the preparation of tests and quizzes, and guidelines for correcting students’ work.

At school B, the first, second, third, fourth and sixth teachers confirmed that the guidance they receive from their instructional supervisors through regular follow-up promotes their professional learning experience. In that respect, the first teacher explained, “From the head of department we learn many things. She keeps giving us, I mean things [advice]- especially for lesson preparation” and in terms of how the lesson should be “organized” and taught. She added, “We are benefitting from the coordinator” as well with regards to “making sure that we are all doing the same thing in our classes.” The second teacher explained that her instructional supervisor offers guidance to teachers by regularly offering teachers a few targeted off-campus workshops teachers could attend. The third teacher explained that the purpose of guidance is to help teachers “improve” their “teaching methods” by “assisting” and “showing” teachers how to implement instructional practices. The fourth and sixth teachers at school B described their instructional supervisors guiding teachers during ‘project based learning’ projects, over the summer for specific department and instructional matters, after school ‘afternoon department sessions’, as well as guidance communicated through the coordinator. School B focus group teachers agreed that teachers’ professional learning benefits when instructional supervisors guide teachers through regular follow-up. One document from school B, a booklet called “21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Boot Camp” by Microsoft Partners in Learning, verifies the practice of this function. It offers teachers step-by-step guidelines, i.e.

planning tools for activities, rubrics etc., for teachers to refer to regularly with their instructional supervisors as they planned their ‘project-based learning’ units.

**Providing teachers with resources and other instructional materials.**

Participants at both schools described instructional supervisors providing teachers with resources and other instructional materials as markedly improving teachers’ professional learning experience. Participants reported that when teachers received instructional resources and materials, they spent less time creating materials and searching for resources and were better able to focus on instruction as well as their professional learning. Two instructional supervisors at school A and three at school B discussed this function. Four teachers from school A and two from school B mentioned this function. The third row of Table 5, on page 133, represents the frequency of participants who identified this function.

*Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.* At school A, the first instructional supervisor explained that she “will prepare samples of” resources for instructional activities, which are made available to teachers at her office. The second instructional supervisor clarified resources are made available “according to the needs of the department.” She added, “I find resources are needed because really here we are challenged with repeating the same plan. So maybe we need new kinds of supplements to break the boredom, you know because students are getting bored with the traditional way of teaching. Teachers will get bored also.”

At school B, the first, second and fourth instructional supervisors agree that this function promotes teachers’ professional learning experience. The first instructional supervisor at school B shared that she hands teachers resources such as books she receives from publishing companies to use in parallel with textbooks and to help them with their planning and she would also distribute professional literature

to enrich teachers' professional knowledge. The second instructional explained that as he is a member of N.C.T.M.- [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics], he regularly receives online resources, which he passes on to the coordinator to share with teachers in the department. The fourth instructional supervisor explained that resources and materials are discussed and arranged for during the summer for the following academic year.

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, the first, fourth, fifth and sixth teachers agreed that their instructional supervisors provide instructional resources and materials to them to facilitate their planning and instruction, which in turn enhances their professional learning experience at the school. The first teacher at school A for instance explained that her instructional supervisor provides the teachers in the department with student work sheets for group work which saves the teachers much time to focus on other instructional and professional learning tasks. The fourth, fifth, teachers agrees adding that their instructional supervisors provide books, educational movies, and resources for students with learning challenges to facilitate teachers' planning as well as the implementation of their lessons. The fifth teacher at school added that their instructional supervisor would introduce professional literature related to a certain instructional topic whereby the instructional supervisor and teachers would conduct research (Internet or other sources) to investigate and discuss the effectiveness of certain instructional strategies to be considered for implementation in classrooms. On the whole, the focus group responses of teachers at school A verified that when instructional supervisor provide teachers with instructional resources and other teaching aids, that teachers' professional learning experience benefitted. One focus member mentioned that instructional supervisors did their best to provide teachers with instructional resources but could not guarantee

supplying more expensive resources, such as LCDs, to teachers as the school needs to review the school budget.

Three documents supplied to the researcher from the instructional supervisors provide at school A confirm this function. They show that instructional supervisors teachers with a 'Voice Projection', a 'Critical Reading' and an 'Evaluation of Science Posters' checklists to apply in the classroom to guide students' learning.

At school B, the first and the sixth teachers explained that when their instructional supervisors provide them with instructional resources and professional literature related to educational matters, positively affect their professional learning experience. The first and sixth teachers at school B agreed that their instructional supervisors provide them with books. For example, the first teacher at school B said, "She [instructional supervisor] brings us books from the French Cultural Center. Whatever we need [in terms of] books we receive." She added that the instructional supervisor also distributes professional literature (i.e. educational magazines) via the coordinator for teachers to read and identify interesting and effective instructional practices and activities to implement.

The focus group teachers at school B verified that their professional learning experience is enhanced when their instructional supervisors provide teachers with resources and other instructional materials. However, they noted that some departments were more fortunate to have greater supplies and access to resources and instructional materials. One teacher in the focus group explained that in her department, professional literature was not used as a way to promote teachers' professional learning, while the other two teachers in the focus group corroborated that their respective instructional supervisors did distribute professional literature for that purpose. One document from school A corroborates this function- the 'Teacher

and Staff Guide' is made available to teachers to request or use such resources such as the television/VHS, cassette recorders, overhead projector, LCD and included a section for teachers to specify any other resources they might need.

### **Evaluating Instructional Practices**

The fifth role, evaluating instructional practices; consists of three functions: monitoring and observing teachers' instructional practices, communicating instructional feedback to teachers; and assessing teachers' professional learning needs. All instructional supervisors at both schools reported that monitoring and observing teachers' instructional practices improves teachers' professional learning. Most teachers at school A (3 of 6) and all teachers at school B also identified this function as enhancing teachers' professional learning. With regards to communicating instructional feedback to teachers, all instructional supervisors at both schools cited that this function enhances teachers' professional learning. Most teachers at school A (4 of 6) and most at school B (3 of 6) considered this function as affecting their professional learning. Finally, all instructional supervisors at school A and most at school B (3 of 4) reported that assessing teachers' professional learning needs helps promote teachers' learning; and most teachers at school A (4 of 6) and most at school B (4 of 6) discussed this function. Table 6, on the following page, demonstrates the frequency of participants who discussed these functions.

Table 6  
*Instructional Supervisors' Role in Promoting Teachers' Professional Learning: Evaluating instructional practices*

	<i>School A</i>				<i>School B</i>			
	Instructional supervisors' (Total of 2)	Teachers (Total of 6)	Teachers in focus group (Total of 10)	Documents and records	Instructional supervisors' (Total of 4)	Teachers' (Total of 6)	Teachers' focus group (Total of 3)	Documents and records
Monitoring and observing teachers' instructional practices	✓ (2)	✓ (3)	✓	✓	✓ (4)	✓ (6)	✓	✓
Communicating instructional feedback to teachers	✓ (2)	✓ (4)	✓	-	✓ (4)	✓ (3)	✓	-
Assessing teachers; professional learning needs	✓ (2)	✓ (4)	✓	✓	✓ (3)	✓ (4)	✓	✓
	✓ : mentioned		_: not mentioned/not available		( ):Frequency of responses			

Frequency of participants who identified these functions.

**Monitoring and observing teachers' instructional practices.** 'Monitoring and observing teachers' instructional practices' has been identified by participants at both schools as positively affecting teachers' professional learning. The participants described this function as important because instructional supervisors help teachers identify their strengths and weaknesses in terms of planning and classroom instruction. Above, the first row of Table 6 represents the frequency of participants who discussed this function.

**Instructional supervisors' perspectives.** At school A, the first and second instructional supervisors observe teachers formally once per term, which is three times during in the academic year. Through formal observations, the instructional supervisors at school A reported learning teachers' professional learning gains and needs. The first and second instructional supervisors also observed teachers informally as their 'peer' and when the supervisors want to learn about a teacher's exceptional instructional skills or when they are concerned about assisting a struggling teacher. Furthermore, both instructional supervisors believed that they



helped teachers' professional learning by monitoring teachers' planning documents and records of instructional activities. The first instructional supervisor at school A said that when teachers provide her with "evidence of their work like pictures" she could understand how teachers are learning and assist them if necessary. She added that upon reviewing teachers' weekly plans, if she finds the lesson plan lacking, she reminds teachers to include certain instructional strategies and details that teachers had learned through workshops and had discussed during department meetings with their supervisor. The second instructional supervisor also monitors teacher professional learning by maintaining and reviewing records of teachers' observations to track teachers' professional learning advances.

At school B, the first instructional supervisor said that through observing she develops a better understanding of the extent of teachers' professional learning advances, adding "Sometimes when I'm observing a class, something catches my attention" with regards to how teachers are improving or if there is an instructional gap that needs to be addressed.

The first instructional supervisor at school B also explained that she keeps track of teachers' professional learning by reviewing teachers' instructional work (lesson plans, tests) and teachers' observation evaluation. To further enhance teachers' professional learning experience, she added, "Most of the times I review the list of training workshop options before I give the options to the teachers." The second instructional supervisor offered a similar account to that of the first instructional supervisor, only adding that he regulates the frequency of observations according to teachers' professional learning needs. The third and fourth instructional supervisors at school B, both coordinators, explained that while they do not observe

teachers like the heads of department and the principals indicated that teachers benefit from the observations and the regular monitoring of their work.

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, the third, fourth and fifth teachers agreed that instructional supervisors monitor their instructional work- by reviewing teachers' planning and other related documents- enhances their professional learning experience. For instance, the third teacher explained at school A explained that her instructional supervisor keeps track of teachers' professional learning by taking notes during classroom observations, which serves to help teachers improve their instructional practices; and the fifth teacher revealed that her instructional supervisor fulfills this function by monitoring teachers' lesson and project/activity plans to ensure that teachers are on track and applying the agreed upon instructional strategies. The fourth teacher reported that her instructional supervisor monitors what teachers are learning and implementing in their classrooms by collecting documents such as those distributed during workshops that teachers attend, in addition teacher plans for evidence that teachers plan to implement some of the activities and strategies learned at those workshops. The third and the fourth teachers reported classroom observations by their instructional supervisors as positively affecting their professional learning experience. The first explained, "Even when she attends our classes and she observes, you don't feel as if you're disturbed 'Oh my God, my coordinator is coming and I'm now being observed'"; she added, "You feel that your friend is sitting next to you. She doesn't interfere in a very – in a negative way." The fourth teacher explained that observations help instructional supervisors keep track of instructional practices that teachers are implementing such as integrating 'daily-life extensions' in most lessons as agreed upon by the department. The focus group teachers at school A agree that formal observations positively affect teachers'

professional learning experience, but they all expressed that unannounced ‘pop-in’/’walk-in’ observations did not enhance teachers’ professional learning. Focus group teachers explained that such observations by instructional supervisors are perceived as though “you are imposing yourself”. She explained,

“I mean ‘pop-in’ [observations] is maybe for the coordinator to be able to see the difference in a teacher when she is well prepared for an announced meeting, observation or an unannounced [observation]. It’s for her [the instructional supervisor] benefit; but it’s not effective for us [teachers] to develop more because we’re not being well prepared- had you known ahead of time you would have prepared more.”

One school A document, the ‘Teacher Appraisal Form’ corroborates this function. This document is completed by instructional supervisors and shared with teachers and administrators. The ‘Teacher Appraisal Form’ evaluates the following areas: ‘Instructional Skills’, ‘Communication Skills/Teacher-Student Rapport’, ‘Classroom Management Skills’, and teachers’ ‘Professional Responsibilities or Qualities’.

At school B, the six teachers explained that observations were mostly carried out by: the principal, assistant principal, and the head of department in most departments at the school- but not the coordinator. All teachers at the school confirmed that observing teachers positively affects teachers’ professional learning. The first teacher at school B explained that observations help her learn as the instructional supervisor requests teachers to apply more effort to teaching; hence with this request in mind the teacher learns more about the ‘student-centered’ approach and implements this approach more frequently. The third agreed as she noted,

“I’ve heard, they’re planning on giving us sessions about how to teach [students] through games- teaching lessons. I think they noticed in observing [us] that sometimes the methods are very traditional, like they were not up-to-date or they were not like active [interactive]- active learning or games. So I think they’re planning a session just for that in the coming future.”

The second, fourth, fifth, and sixth teachers agree that instructional supervisors fulfill this function, which encourages teachers to improve their instructional practices. The first, fourth and sixth teachers emphasized that their professional learning benefits when instructional supervisors monitor instructional documents and records such as tests, answer keys, lesson plans and workshop documents to understand how teachers implement instructional practices. The focus group teachers at school B confirmed that when instructional supervisors monitor and observe instructional practices teachers’ professional learning is enhanced. At school B, the school’s ‘Teacher and Staff Guide’ includes three teacher appraisal forms: a ‘Class Observation Form’, a ‘Teachers’ Department Evaluation Form’ and a ‘Teacher’s Summative Evaluation Form’. The ‘Class Observation Form’ evaluates teachers in the following areas: ‘Teaching Methodology’, ‘Linguistic Competence’, ‘Class Management’, ‘Time Management’ and includes a section for the observer to include other observation comments. The ‘Teachers’ Department Evaluation Form’ evaluates teachers in the following areas: ‘Commitment to Teaching and Learning’, ‘Works in harmony with Head of Department’, ‘Works in Harmony with Peers’, ‘Capacity in Subject’, ‘Planning/Lesson Preparation’, ‘Adherence to Curricula’, ‘Teaching Methodology’, and a blank section for additional comments. And lastly the ‘Teacher’s Summative Evaluation Form’ evaluates the following areas: teachers’ ‘Teaching Skills’, ‘Professional Qualities’, ‘Punctuality’, ‘Personal Qualities’, a

section for comments, attendance, teaching experience and recommendations.

However, teachers in the focus group at school B reported that while they received the 'Teacher and Staff Guide' they did not refer to it throughout the year nor did they receive any appraisal forms from this guide after observations.

**Communicating instructional feedback to teachers.** Participants at school A and B reported that when instructional supervisors communicate instructional feedback to teachers, and when it is done with the purpose of improving teachers' instructional practice as well as to encourage teachers to continue learning it has a positive impact on of this function has on teachers' professional learning. The second row of Table 6, on page 145, shows the frequency of participants who identified this function.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A both instructional supervisors emphasized that teachers' professional learning improves with the communication of clear feedback through weekly department meetings, through other encounters with teachers, and most critically after classroom observations. The instructional supervisors explained that they communicate positive feedback first and address 'negative' feedback or recommendations in a diplomatic and honest manner with the purpose of improving teachers' instructional practice.

At school B, all four instructional supervisors indicated that they regularly communicated instructional feedback to teachers in groups and individually and they reported the positive effects of this function on teachers' professional learning as observed in teachers' planning and subsequent observations. The first, second and fourth instructional supervisors indicated that feedback is regularly communicated to teachers through weekly department meetings, bridging meetings and other encounters with teachers. For example, the third instructional supervisor at school B

explained, “During the grade three meetings the head of department will meet with us will give feedback about the whole week that we’ve done. He will check the papers of what we’ve done and [he] will give us his remarks.” He added that the head of department also communicates feedback post-observation, which helps teachers improve their instructional weaknesses.

*Teachers’ perspectives.* At school A, four teachers, the second, third, fourth and fifth reported that receiving instructional feedback from their instructional supervisors is beneficial to their professional growth in that they learn about which instructional practices need to be improved. Also, the third teacher explained that her instructional supervisor communicates feedback in a non-threatening manner, which encourages her to oblige to requests for improvement. The fifth teacher expressed a similar perspective saying, “The coordinator plays a significant role [in my professional learning]. Especially our coordinator- she provides feedback in an indirect manner so we can understand the idea that she’s trying to convey- she does this in a pleasant manner.” The teachers in the focus group at school A corroborate this function as promoting teachers’ professional learning experience. Only one teacher wrote, “Sometimes [this is true]. A coordinator’s perspective is not so clear for teachers, so the goal is not the same.” No evidence from the documents obtained from school A verifies this function.

At school B, three teachers, the first, fourth and sixth confirm that instructional supervisors fulfill this function and that it benefits teachers’ professional growth. The first explained, “During the observation, she [the instructional supervisor] gives us feedback and we apply [improvements] afterwards.” The fourth teacher indicated that any feedback she receives from her instructional supervisor is delivered verbally- the teacher did not receive written post-observation evaluation and

feedback. The sixth teacher however indicated that teachers received a ‘summative evaluation form’ towards the end of the year for teachers to base their professional learning plan for the coming academic year. The focus group teachers at school B agreed that this function promoted teachers professional learning experience. No evidence in the school B documents indicates that teachers received feedback from their respective instructional supervisors.

**Assessing teachers’ professional learning needs.** By assessing teachers’ professional learning needs, the participants described that instructional supervisors at both schools helped improve teachers’ professional learning. Participants reported that instructional supervisors assessed teachers’ professional learning needs by: directly asking teachers about their needs; working closely with teachers: and observing teachers. The third row of Table 6, on page 145, depicts the frequency of participants who identified this function.

***Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.*** At school A, the first and second instructional supervisors explained that they directly asked teachers about their professional learning needs and how they can help each other advance. The first instructional supervisor explained that she recruits teachers with instructional strengths to help teach teachers certain instructional practices. She said, “At the beginning of the academic year, I asked teachers to identify their strengths and based on what they have identified as their strength, set up a workshop to offer their experience to other teachers to assist them.” The supervisor added that workshops that those teachers offered to their peers were based on teachers’ requests as well. The second instructional supervisor also said that she directly asks teachers how she can assist their professional learning. She would ask them, “What do you really need

for me to teach you?” and after assessing teachers’ most pressing professional learning needs, she create and present a workshop for them.

Both instruction supervisors indicated that they assess the needs of their department and provide resources and professional learning opportunities to enhance teachers’ professional. The first instructional supervisor as school A said, “I also work over the summer holidays on a specific ‘point’ [goal] that I noticed teachers need to develop further”, such as teaching article writing to students, which is considered quite challenging by teachers in her department. To this, the second instructional supervisor said, “I am the one who is going to know who is the teacher and how good she is or how much improvement she needs.” Adding that based on this close work relationship with teachers she prepares and presents “workshops according to the needs of teachers”; for example, introducing them to softwares such as Movie Maker and Roxio to integrate into their instructional activities.

Furthermore, both instructional supervisors emphasized the importance of classroom observations in helping them assess and address teachers’ professional learning needs. Through observations, the first instructional supervisor at school A noticed that a teacher experienced extreme challenges with classroom and time management although she was quite knowledgeable in her field, the supervisor said that this ex-administrator’s first year returning to teaching proved to be overwhelming as she received a decidedly difficult classroom. For these reasons, the instructional supervisor and administrators believed that they could help this teacher grow professionally by offering her a different position within the school where she could also assist other teachers’ professional learning. She said, “if you had seen her two years ago, she was down, down more than you can imagine [depressed]. Now see how motivated she is. Every activity she does, we give it importance, modify it,



and I have coordination hours with her to create the best activities for events and many other things. What I mean to say she is now in the right place [position within the school].”

At school B, the first and second instructional supervisors expressed similar perspectives with regards to this function, saying that they believe that they are able to identify teachers’ professional learning needs- due to close working relationships, classroom observations, and such examples- and hence, are able to differentiate relevant professional learning activities based on teachers’ individual and group learning needs. The fourth instructional supervisor- a coordinator, agrees with this perspective, adding that her head of department truly understands teachers’ professional learning needs.

*Teachers’ perspectives.* At school A, the third, fourth and fifth teachers also mentioned that their instructional supervisors assess teachers’ professional learning needs and try to address those needs. The third, fourth, and fifth teachers at school A explained that their instructional supervisors assess their professional learning needs and recommend workshops for them to attend. The third teacher said, “She [the instructional supervisor] shows us lists [of workshops]. She definitely said that it’s preferable if you choose this one [referring to a workshop about writing] it’s better since it will help us.” The fourth teacher added that instructional supervisors assess teachers’ professional learning needs by “Knowing each and every teacher. Knowing the weaknesses, the strengths. This is where you head from [start].” She added, “So according to me, I don’t think it [professional learning] should be one task [size] fits all.” The fifth teacher explained that her instructional supervisor gives her professional learning options “as she knows what I am concerned about, interested in [learning], [that would affect] the quality of teaching and my students’ [needs].” The

teachers in the focus group at school A verify that in general instructional supervisors fulfill this function and that it positively enhances teachers' professional growth.

However, three focus group teachers expressed that their instructional supervisors are not successful at assessing and meeting their professional learning needs. One of these teachers said,

“So they select the wrong people to attend those workshops. They do not know our needs, and even if they know, they [administrators and instructional supervisors] choose and they are paying. They do not match our [professional learning] needs with our portfolio. If they open our portfolio and our appraisal forms they would know that for example we do not have problems in that area [weakness or areas for growth] that others [teachers] might have and they might benefit from this workshop.”

Also, three focus group teachers did not agree that instructional supervisors attempts to address teachers' professional learning needs are effective. They criticized professional development sessions conducted during the summer holidays. One teacher wrote, “It should be during [the] academic year because summer is for teachers to rest” another teacher wrote the same comment. These teachers expressed that instructional supervisors must also understand teachers' need to ‘unwind’ over the summer holidays as teachers' work is extremely taxing physically and mentally.

One document, ‘Exchange of Experiences Summer’ from school A is distributed to teachers so that teachers can write about their summer professional learning experience to share with the instructional supervisor and amongst each other. The document asks teachers what caught their attention at a workshop, what instructional strategies they could possibly implement in their classrooms, and what teachers might need to implement what they have learned in their classes.

At school B, the third, fourth, fifth and sixth teachers agreed that their instructional supervisors do assess their professional learning needs. The third explained that her instructional supervisor fulfills this function but is not always successful with the type of professional learning selection. She explained, “We teachers need more practical things, sometimes they don’t see what they [teachers] need.” The fourth teacher however, explained that her instructional supervisor is very successful at assessing teachers’ professional learning needs. She said, “He [instructional supervisor] asked us ‘What sessions would you like us to do during this summer? What are your needs in your department in the upper elementary? What are the difficulties that you are encountering?’ So we can prepare a session for the summer, so we can resolve the issues [address professional needs.” Also their instructional supervisor consistently fulfills this function always asking what teachers “feel” they need to “learn”. She added, “He always follows-up, for this reason he sets time for the summer- three sessions [regarding] the things that we need help in.” The sixth teacher also confirmed this saying, “We have the head of department who always offers us sessions. She considers where we are lacking [in instructional training] within the division. I mean she looks [at what we need] in the division- here you also have to check in with the coordinator, she observes where there are gaps. There are gaps for example in this division; she [the head of department prepares for us [teachers] a session that addresses this gap so that we try to overcome it.” The teachers in the focus group at school B agree that instructional supervisors assess teachers professional learning needs but that they are not always successful in meeting teachers’ individual or group needs. The focus group teachers were specific in saying that the administration did not understand their group professional needs. They described the professional learning day workshops as too grandiose to be

implemented within the requested time frame and preferred workshops that presented more practical instructional strategies for teachers to implement in the classroom. One school document supports this function- the “Academic Activities for the Coming Academic Year 2013-2014”. The document is used to gather information about teachers’ professional learning preferences and asks teachers to give further suggestions.

### **Factors that Affect Promoting Teachers’ Professional Learning**

The two-phase data analysis also revealed that certain factors affect promoting teachers’ professional learning either through enhancing this learning or becoming obstacles that hinder it. Based on the comparative analysis of instructional supervisors’ and teachers’ perceptions in schools A and B the following three categories were created to organize these factors: the design of professional learning activities; teacher characteristics; and school conditions and context. Tables for each category will summarize the categories and represent the frequency of participants who identified or discussed features of these three factors.

### **The Design of Professional Learning Activities**

Based on the results, the respondents pointed at the criticality of the design of professional learning activities in enhancing learning. The designs that they pointed at consisted of the following: workshops or presentations; self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology; guided, job-embedded professional learning related to instructional challenges and advancing students’ learning; professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection of practice; and continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction.

Overall, participants from both schools perceived that the choice of the design of and participation in professional learning activities as the core factor for advancing teachers' professional learning. Participants agree that they rely on workshops and presentations as a chief activity for triggering their professional growth. They explained that they maintain and renew their knowledge, skills and abilities: by leading and planning their own professional learning approach, and 'on the job' through guided professional learning from instructional supervisors and peers. Also, the participants conveyed the value of engaging in focused professional dialogue among peers and instructional supervisors as well as reflecting on one's practice as affecting teachers' professional learning. Besides, instructional supervisors and teachers at both schools observed that continuous evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction among peers also impacts teachers' professional learning.

Table 7, on the following page, represents the professional learning activities that participants identified.

Table 7

*List of The Design of Professional Learning Activities*

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Workshops or presentations
Self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology
Guided, job-embedded professional learning related to instructional challenges and advancing students' learning
Professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection of practice
Continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction

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A representation of 'professional learning activities' identified by participants.

According to the results, all instructional supervisors at school A and most supervisors at school B identified workshops or presentations as activities that promote teachers' professional learning. All teachers at school A and most teachers at school B (5 of 6) mentioned this activity as well. With regards to engaging in self-directed learning activities, all instructional supervisors (2 of 2) at school A and all supervisors (4 of 4) at school B, all teachers at school A (6 of 6), and at school B (6 of 6) as well as those participating in the focus groups reported this activity as effective. Both instructional supervisors at school A and most and most instructional supervisors at school B (3 of 4) instructional supervisors at school B reported guided and job-embedded professional learning activities as promoting teachers' professional learning. Most teachers at school A (5 of 6) and at school B (4 of 6) also discussed such activities. With regards to engaging in professional dialogue and reflection on practice, all instructional supervisors at school A and school B, all teachers at school A and most teachers at school B (5 of 6) identified this activity as positively affecting teachers' professional learning. Lastly, continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of practice was reported as promoting teachers' professional learning by all instructional supervisors at both schools as well as by all teachers at school A and school B. Table 8, on page 160, depicts the frequency of participants who cited the professional learning activities.

**Workshops and presentations.** According to the participants at both schools, teachers' and instructional supervisors' direct involvement in workshops and presentations significantly enhances teachers' professional learning. In general, participants explained that they benefited more from in-service trainings as such trainings are planned with teachers' professional learning needs in mind. Also, when



workshops or presentations this enhanced teachers' professional learning experience at school. The first instructional supervisor explained that she asks teachers to conduct workshops based on their instructional strengths so that they "offer their experience to other teachers to assist them". The second instructional supervisor agrees with this practice adding that while presenting workshops is optional, teachers are held accountable for presenting their own workshops as part of their teachers' final appraisal. She also said that, in addition to the 'Professional Day' workshops she finds it effective when she presents workshops to teachers based on their professional learning needs, especially as they are limited on time to address instructional practices in depth during weekly department.

At school B, the first and the second instructional supervisors agree that conducting workshops or presentations benefit teachers' professional learning. The first instructional supervisor explained that if she has a number of teachers with similar areas for professional growth she will request a trainer to offer the teachers a workshop, however, she emphasized, "I always think if I can prepare a workshop for them before resorting to seeking outside assistance [of someone to present a workshop]."

***Teachers' perspectives.*** At school A, all six teachers confirmed that when teachers and instructional supervisors participate in presenting their own workshops or other professional learning presentations to their peers that this benefited teachers' professional learning. They all confirmed that in addition to attending off-campus workshops, they also conducted workshops and presentations. The second teacher explained how participating in presenting her own workshop benefitted her own professional learning as well as her peers' professional learning. She reported the following:



“Every year in my school we have a ‘Professional Day’. And every year my coordinator prepares a workshop and I attend that workshop and I really, really make use of all the ideas that she presents, and because she doesn’t present only theory. She presents really hands on experiences and activities. So I really apply those in my class and my learning and my teaching has changed like one hundred and eighty degrees because of that.”

And in reference to conducting her own workshop, the teacher explains why it is beneficial to her professional learning:

“When you conduct a workshop you really, really benefit twice, twice as much as you learn, because you will search for the topics, you will search for examples from students, you will mix all that up [integrate, synthesize the information]. You will [use] the computer, you will [use] the Internet, you will go to books, [and] to references- that’s why you benefit.”

Teachers in the focus group agree that when teachers and instructional supervisors conduct workshops and presentations teachers’ professional learning was positively affected. However, two focus group teachers noted that this practice is beneficial “only if there are new ideas to learn,” adding “this year they had a workshop about classroom management. They repeat it again the next year or next term and it isn’t effective because we already did it [the classroom management workshop]. Because we did it and we are applying it. I don’t need to attend such a workshop because I don’t have a problem in classroom management.” One document, “Workshop Titles”, confirms the implementation of workshops. This document represents names of teachers and the workshops they have presented at school for that academic year including the time and location. However, there were no documents that pointed at matching the workshops to the teachers’ needs.

At school B, the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth teachers reported that their administration asks them to conduct workshops as a way to help them grow professionally. The third teacher explained that after attending an off-campus workshop she creates a workshop for her colleagues to teach them the strategies she had learned. She said, “I had a small workshop for my colleagues. I gave them the sheets, the handouts, I explained a few [activities], I shared them.” The fourth, fifth and sixth teachers noted that participation in smaller professional learning presentations is effective to promoting their learning. One such example is teachers reading books of their choice related to education and meeting later to present to one another what they have learned and discuss classroom applications. The focus group teachers agree that participating in professional learning presentations and conducting workshops enhances teachers’ professional leaning experience. No documents were found in school B to provide further evidence on this practice.

**Self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology.** Self-directed learning was described by participants as any learning initiative that teachers take on their own- where teachers, and even instructional supervisors, advance their own professional learning by learning about current research in instructional practices and advances in technology. Participants at both school explained that instructional supervisors and teachers continuously work on their professional learning and they agree that teachers’ benefit greatly when teachers lead their own learning. The second row of Table 8, on page 160, represents the frequency of participants who discussed this professional learning activity.

***Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.*** At school A, both instructional supervisors explained that supervisors and teachers take charge of their own professional learning by doing research in instructional practices and remaining up-

to-date with advances in technology. The instructional supervisors explained that they participated in self-directed learning to help teachers' professional learning as well as to help students learn. The first instructional supervisor at school A said, "I conduct studies, I read the latest research related to teaching to help teachers' professional learning- like explore a topic that will become my focus like 'How to Keep Teachers Motivated'." She also reported that teachers also participate in self-directed learning, choosing "their own targets and objectives that they have to work on...They work on these targets and objectives and reveal what they have learned."

At school B, all four instructional supervisors reported that coordinators, heads of departments and teachers regularly participate in self-directed learning to remain up-to-date with effective instructional practices and advances in technology. The second instructional supervisor relayed that teachers regularly work on their own research on effective math activities to implement with their students. The third instructional supervisor at school B explained that self-directed learning is an important form of "continuous learning" and that teachers should not be "satisfied with what" they have "learned or stop at this level"; for this reason teachers participate in their own learning by researching "new technologies, new methods" in instruction to facilitate teaching challenging concepts to students.

***Teachers' perspectives.*** At school A, all six teachers confirmed that participating in their self-directed learning significantly enhances their professional learning experience. The teachers conveyed that they remained up-to-date with current research in instructional matters and technology by reading and resorting to the Internet using Google, YouTube and other websites to aid their learning and instruction. Teachers reported reading books, articles, as well as research found on the Internet and improved their knowledge and skills concerning computer softwares

and other technologies related to education. The second teacher said, “A truly professional learning experience in my opinion is when you for example take ideas from the Internet, from the workshop, from any source, from a book, and really, really find it useful and apply it in your classroom directly and find good results from that.” The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth teachers descriptions support these perspectives explaining that self-directed learning has helped them learn and implement new instructional strategies. Some teachers also learned how to use computer softwares, such as Movie Maker, to enhance their lessons. All teachers attributed the effectiveness of this type of professional learning to the fact that teachers are personally interested and invested in what they have selected to learn about. All focus group teachers confirmed that self-directed learning plays a major role in advancing their professional learning. One focus group teacher explained the importance of self-directed professional learning as follows:

“... you have to do research, and improve yourself, so that you can improve the students of this class. I mean the nature of your work naturally necessitates professional learning- especially if the person who loves his profession, and who desires to advance and achieve results- whether academic, whether related to students’ behavior- inherently makes you want to take the initiative to participate in doing research to improve yourself professionally.”

She added:

“You are in classrooms day in and day out and you are observing the missteps in certain instructional gaps and what it is that you have to improve in order to achieve better results with students.”

At school B, all six teachers agreed that participating in doing their own research as well as seeking training in fields related to their own practice enhances

their professional learning. As in school A, at school B all teachers attributed the effectiveness of self-directed learning to the fact that teachers are personally interested and invested in what they have selected to research. The first teacher explained that teachers are always researching new instructional practices and share successful practices to be adopted by the department. She also emphasized that teachers read “for [their] own enrichment”. The third teacher also supports these views and explained that she also travels abroad for “update” courses in the United Kingdom to attend workshops related to current instructional strategies in education. Focus group teachers all agreed that participating in self-directed activities positively affects their professional learning experience.

**Guided, job-embedded professional learning related to instructional challenges and advancing students’ learning.** Instructional supervisors and teachers at both schools revealed that guided and job-embedded professional learning, mostly to address issues related to instructional challenges and advancing students’ learning, positively enhance teachers’ professional learning. They asserted that teachers’ professional learning is positively affected by learning ‘on the job’ regularly with colleagues and while teaching. At both schools, the instructional supervisors had explained that they lead their teachers’ professional learning through a series of one-on-one or group sessions to help teachers overcome certain instructional challenges. The third row of Table 8, on page 160, depicts the frequency of participants who identified this professional learning activity.

*Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.* At school A, both instructional supervisors agreed that teachers’ professional learning is positively affected by guided and job-embedded learning. The first instructional supervisor reported that while there is no “formal” form for guided or job-embedded learning, she considers

it her role to direct the members of the department “to do better” by discussing their instructional shortcomings and challenges so that she can lead her team of teachers towards finding solutions to instructional challenges. She added, “it is through me that a professional learning goal becomes formal- when I ask teachers to work on their [instructional ‘problems’].” She explained that regularly meeting with teachers to readdress the set professional goals makes it clear to teachers that their instructional supervisor is expecting them to improve their instructional strategies and provide evidence of their learning. The following quote depicts an example of the guided learning activities she uses with her teachers in the department:

“So I create [look for] a challenging case for the teacher whereby they select one or two students to help ‘take their hand’ and help them out little by little. For sure the teacher will teach all students and pay attention to all students’ needs, but she will make it a point to focus on helping this particular student who needs help as a means to challenge herself. This is a way [for professional learning] I invented, discovered to find out to what degree they are capable of reaching students and succeeding in teaching them [challenging students] when others before [him/her] could not.”

The second instructional supervisor expressed similar views and reported that in addition to teaching teachers how to use and implement technology (i.e. Movie Maker, Roxio) into lessons, she also meets with teachers to work on specific instructional challenges (i.e. making science lessons more interactive) often resorting to Google and YouTube to find viable options.

At school B, the first, third, fourth instructional supervisors reported teachers learning through guided professional learning activities. The first instructional supervisor explained that she provides guided professional learning by giving

teachers books to read related to the discipline they are teaching or regarding instruction. She said, “She [the teacher] comes and takes it [the book] and I give her a specific time [to complete reading and commenting on the book] to come back to me with feedback [about the book] and request that she prepares a presentation for colleagues who are with her in the department.” In addition to this form of guided professional learning, the first and fourth instructional supervisors also reported meeting after school hours in the afternoon for sessions with the teachers to address instructional challenges and or discuss topics of interest related to the discipline they teach.

*Teachers’ perspectives.* At school A, the first, second, third, fourth and sixth teachers agreed that guided, job-embedded professional learning is effective. The first, fourth, and sixth teachers reported that their instructional supervisor frequently prepares and presents a professional learning activity emphasizing that the coordinator is the main source for most of their job-embedded professional learning at school. The fourth teacher explained,

“Our coordinator gave assignments to each and every teacher- whether cycle one or cycle two. First she made [presented] a workshop about how to use Movie Maker in science. She taught us all in the computer lab how to use it, how to apply it, how to get pictures, videos and so on and how to relate it so science and do [create] a scientific movie. Next, the second step was giving us an assignment where each teacher had to prepare a science [scientific] movie using the Movie Maker related to what we’re taking [teaching].”

She added that throughout the entire experience the instructional supervisor was monitoring their work and giving teachers feedback.

The second teacher described receiving similar professional learning guidance from her coordinator and added that other people, such as the I.T. person at school was instrumental at helping her further enhance her computer skills and now she is more confident incorporating technology in lessons. The third teacher described her instructional supervisor as always keeping teachers “up-to-date with the newest strategies to apply” with their students. She added that the guided professional learning activity is effective because her instructional supervisor ‘gives teachers the freedom, to feel free to deal with their student, with a [special/challenging] case they’re facing’.

The teachers in the focus group agreed that this professional learning activity is effective.

At school B, the first, third, fourth and fifth teachers confirmed that guided, job-embedded professional learning takes place regularly to enhance teachers competency in the subject matter they teach as well as to tackle instructional challenges related to improving students’ learning. The first teacher reported learning every day at work while teaching and with colleagues. When working with the head of department, the head of department would recommend books for teachers to read. She explained, “She [the head of department] presents sessions to us if we need anything, if she finds anything in the preparation [lesson plan] that she isn’t too fond of or something. We have a session together we stay [after school] in the afternoon in the school.” She added that teachers in general benefit more from guided learning sessions with their coordinator than other professional learning activities as they work on practical solutions to current instructional issues. In addition to the guided sessions such as the one just described, the third, fourth and fifth teachers reported finding solutions to instructional matters, for example, by discussing them with



another instructional supervisor or colleague at school as well as receiving articles from colleagues and instructional supervisors for added support. All focus group teachers agree that guided, job-embedded professional learning promotes teachers' professional learning.

**Professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection on practice.**

Instructional supervisors and teachers at both schools identified the use of professional dialogue and reflection on practice as effective practices that enhance teachers' professional learning. The use of professional dialogue refers to discussing instructional practice with others, colleagues and instructional supervisors to develop a common understanding of what they are aiming to achieve. Reflection on practice refers to the act of reviewing one's instructional practice to oneself or with others, colleagues and instructional supervisors. It could be done in writing or shared verbally with colleagues and instructional supervisors and mostly for the purpose of evaluating one's practice and/or to find solutions to instructional challenges. The fourth row of Table 8, on page 160, represents the frequency of participants who identified this professional learning practice.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A both instructional supervisors mentioned reflection on practice as an effective practice that promotes teachers' professional learning. Only the first instructional supervisor elaborated that engaging in professional dialogue with teachers is beneficial to teachers' learning. She re-counted that she assigns teachers professional learning tasks for teachers to complete that requires them to reflect on what they have learned as well as what instructional skills they need to further develop. Upon returning to school, she engages teachers in a conversation to share what they have learned and share their reflections. In reference to this professional learning practice, she said, "This allows

teachers to identify areas of weakness they need to work on. And once they have identified their 'weak point' they can do their research and read and discover new ideas, strategies, and activities. Then we discuss these new ideas, strategies and activities in the coordinating meetings. This helps them know their areas of weakness." She also added that teachers reflect on their practice by reviewing student results. She explained, "Through reflection [reassessing themselves] they can measure how they have improved-especially through student results [achievement and learning]. Similarly, the second instructional supervisor described asking a teacher to use written reflection of practice as a way to assess the teachers' instructional skills. She reported on a particular teacher who is very sensitive and not open to receiving feedback during the post-observation conference meeting. As a result, she requested the teacher to write a reflection paper in which the teacher identified her strengths and weakness something she found to be very effective. She reported that the teacher "evaluated herself better than me. I told her no more [need] to talk. So this is what you have to improve in yourself and she was really, really cooperative and I watched her and observed her again and she is doing well."

In terms of engaging in professional dialogue, the first instructional supervisor suggested that it is critical that technical words/phrases are commonly used to refer to practices or strategies in instruction and education to create a common base of understanding among the teachers in her department. Simply referring to 'one-to-one', 'pair', or 'group' work approaches and the other varieties of technical names and titles of these approaches enhance teachers' professional knowledge. For example, she explained that working on teaching the teachers in her department how to implement group work and its other forms over the course of two years improved teachers' familiarity with the technical terms and what they imply in practice.

Because of this teachers are confident in their knowledge and abilities in applying group work in class.

At school B, all four instructional supervisors agreed that engaging in professional dialogue enhances teachers' professional learning experience at school. None of the instructional supervisors referred to reflection as a practice that affects teachers' professional learning. The first, second, third and fourth instructional supervisors explained that professional dialogue is regularly practiced: during weekly department meetings; at bridging meetings; after teachers attend workshops; during in-service training/'Professional Days' at school; and other informal encounters with colleagues and instructional supervisors. The first instructional supervisor found professional dialogue as an important component in ensuring that department members, coordinators and teachers, are all on the same page in terms of meeting instructional goals and have a common understanding of educational terms (in reference to skills, practices, strategies etc.) to reduce misunderstandings, miscommunication and disagreements during weekly department meetings and at bridging meetings as well as other formal and informal meetings with teachers. The second, third and fourth instructional supervisors expressed similar views.

***Teachers' perspectives.*** At school A, all teachers agreed that engaging in professional dialogue positively affects teachers' professional learning. Four teachers, the first, second, fourth and fifth reported practicing reflection as effective in promoting teachers' learning. All teachers discussed engaging in professional dialogue as helping teachers: 'come up with ideas'; 'exchange experiences' and knowledge related to instruction; examine 'successes and failures' of instructional activities and strategies; as well as learn new instructional strategies and activities. The teachers also described engaging in professional dialogue: during weekly

department meetings; after attending workshops; during in-service training/'Professional Days' at school; and other informal encounters with colleagues and instructional supervisors.

With respect to engaging in reflection, the first, second, third, fourth and fifth teachers at school A reported that they reflect: as they teach; with colleagues; upon reviewing students' academic results; as well as by drawing on their accumulated teaching experiences. The first teacher said,

“From students results that's how I know that this [learning experience] was fruitful and beneficial or not. How students respond and with myself-even evaluating myself for instance [I ask] 'How was this session?' I evaluate that day. For instance, this [thing] I should have focused more on something- you know-evaluating the self. The person comes the next day and reviews the facts.”

All focus group teachers confirmed that engaging in professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection on practice promotes teachers' professional learning.

At school B, five teachers mentioned engaging in professional dialogue as enhancing teachers' professional learning. One of the five teachers also mentioned reflecting on one's practice as effective to one's professional learning. Teachers at school B reported engaging in professional dialogue mostly during: weekly department meetings; at bridging meetings; after attending workshops; during in-service training/'Professional Days' at school; and other informal encounters with colleagues and instructional supervisors. The second teacher, for example, reported most professional dialogue to center on meeting objectives and improving the quality of student assessments. The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth teachers emphasized that professional dialogue focused on what was learned through professional

development activities, both in-service and off-campus, to discuss and learn new strategies to be implemented. The five teachers also suggested that professional dialogue continued via ‘What’s App’ and email where they would share links to instructional information such as educational games, activities, and strategies. The focus group teachers confirmed that teachers’ professional learning is enhanced when they engaged in professional dialogue and reflection on practice.

**Continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction.** Instructional supervisors and teachers at both schools reported that teachers benefit greatly when they regularly engage in peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of implementing instructional plans and teaching. Participants mostly referred to teachers learning from their peers in formal and informal circumstances, as well as through collaborative instructional endeavors with varying levels of teamwork. All instructional supervisors and teachers at both schools mentioned this professional learning practice as positively impacting teachers’ learning. The fifth row of Table 8, on page 160, represents the frequency of participants who discussed this function.

*Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.* At school A, both instructional supervisors noted that teachers regularly work together to check and enhance instructional practices. The first instructional supervisor indicated that teachers learn new instructional practices when they visit each other’s classes to learn. He explained, “...if I am a teacher [in grade] four [section] A and my colleague is a teacher in grade four [section] B- we practice informal coordination [exchange ideas].” She emphasized that when they give each other feedback- an objective one.” She emphasized that when teachers exchange experiences pre and post peer observation, they “offer tips” that involve “ensuring that the information” they “teach

children is taught effectively.” The second instructional supervisor also expressed that teachers constantly monitor instructional practices. The teachers she works with especially improve instructional practices by examining student test results, improving the quality of tests, and implementing more interactive teaching methods.

At school B, all four instructional supervisors reported that through regular department meetings and informal meetings, teachers continuously work together to assess and improve instructional strategies and activities and to monitor the quality of tests and review lesson plans to ensure that activities and strategies are effective and clear. The first supervisor reported that peers work together to check each others’ work, She explained, “ In the same subject we come to the department before going to class, we convince each other- in terms of creativity, propositions [made]- we participate- we make certain that we are working towards achieving the same objective.” The second, third and fourth instructional supervisors also agreed that there are “levels of checking and evaluating” instructional work among peers and instructional supervisors- usually among teachers first via email and during department meetings, after which the coordinator reviews plans and tests before submitting them to the head of department.

Also, the first, third and fourth instructional supervisors emphasized that peer monitoring and evaluation of instruction are practiced during the bridging meetings between teachers and instructional supervisors of consecutive grade levels. The first instructional supervisor explained that during bridging meetings “we immediately have the two teams [of teachers of both grade levels]” who indicate instructional gaps and work towards modifying instructional plans for the coming terms so students will have a “smooth transition” from one grade level to the next. The third instructional supervisor said that during bridging meetings, “They’ll [teachers] see

how were the students [learning]. Whether it [understanding concepts] was achieved with most of them or not, or we have to change some [teaching] methods or to take more time [teaching the concepts].” And the fourth instructional supervisor added that as a result of bridging meetings “we take into consideration what they [students] learned to improve our syllabus based on what the students have acquired and what things [learning objectives] we want to add.”

*Teachers’ perspectives.* At school A, all teachers reported increased levels of professional learning when peers engaged in regular monitoring and evaluation of instructional practices and student learning. They stated that they learned by collaborating and working as a team on lesson plans and other common instructional projects. The fifth and sixth teachers highlighted that the high level of collaboration and teamwork among peers allowed them to improve their instructional plans, the syllabus, and teaching practices. The first teacher noted that they collaborate often on common instructional projects and said, “before we start [teaching] the lesson, we sit together and we think about which activity could be more interesting or what is the method in which we can deliver the specific subject matter.” The second teacher reported improving her instructional practices by learning about other teachers’ practices and suggestions. She said, “I see other perspectives from other teachers for example, if she does something and it worked well with her, I would say ‘Oh why didn’t I think of that?’” The teacher added that she would learn these strategies and apply them in her classroom.

Two teachers in school A, the second and the fourth reported that peer-observations among colleagues positively affects teachers’ professional learning. They conveyed that peer-observations allowed teachers to stay-up-to date with new or different instructional practices and helped evaluate their instructional practices in

a more relaxed atmosphere than a formal observation. Peer-observations for them allowed them to observe a peer teach the same lesson and through this process reassess their teaching approach and improve it. She said,

“Sometimes peer-observations would be in a class with a partner [teacher]. To be a partner teacher- she’s explaining the same lesson you’re [also] explaining [teaching at the same time]. You’re seeing what your students are seeing when you’re explaining and working. You could see [assess] the weaknesses in your plan”

All focus group teachers confirmed that teachers’ professional learning is enhanced with regular peer monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of instructional practices.

At school B, all six teachers agreed that regular peer monitoring and evaluation of effective instructional practices promote teachers’ professional learning. They reported that monitoring and evaluating instructional practices centered on instructional planning, student evaluation and common instructional projects. Additionally, the teachers indicated that the success of their learning is due to high levels of collaboration and teamwork achieved through department meetings, bridging meetings, via email and other informal encounters. None of the teachers at school B mentioned peer-observations as contributing to their professional learning experience.

The first, second, third and fourth teachers explained that they collaborate with peers to design a common lesson plan as well as a project based learning for students. They explained that this work entails reviewing and evaluating each other’s work and discussing recommendations to improve their work before sharing their plans with their instructional supervisors.



The fifth and sixth teachers reported that they find it beneficial to learn about instructional practices from their peers, implement these practices, and re-evaluate the effectiveness of these practices on student learning. All focus group teachers agree that this practice positively impacts their professional learning.

### **Teacher Characteristics**

Based on the individual and focus group interview data, teacher characteristics are viewed to contribute to the quality of teachers' professional learning experience. The nine characteristics identified by participants at both school include: level of ability, knowledge and skills; being creative with instructional practices; commitment to professional learning and the school; being motivated and sustaining motivation; being organized and completing and submitting work in a timely fashion; possessing adequate communication skills; being attentive and open to seeking help from peers and instructional supervisors; being a hard worker and possessing a passion for teaching; and adjusting to change in instructional practices.

Table 9, on the following page, depicts the teacher characteristics that participants identified.

Table 9  
*List of Teacher Characteristics*

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Level of ability, knowledge and skills
Being creative with instructional practices
Commitment to professional learning and the school
Being motivated and sustaining motivation
Being organized and completing and submitting work in a timely fashion
Possessing adequate communication skills
Being attentive and open to seeking help from peers and instructional supervisors
Being a hard worker and possessing a passion for teaching
Adjusting to change in instructional practices

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A representation of ‘teacher characteristics’ identified by participants.

**Level of ability, knowledge and skills.**

Quite plainly, instructional supervisors and teachers talked about the important effect of the degree of a teacher’s overall experience on his or her readiness for professional learning. While most teachers were described as ‘willing and ready to learn’, sometimes teachers’ professional learning needed to be modified in some aspects due to varying levels in their respective abilities, knowledge and skills. All instructional supervisors at both schools mentioned this characteristic. Most teachers at school A (5 of 6) and all teachers at school B discussed this aspect. The first row of Table 10, on the following page, represents the frequency of participants who cited this characteristic.

Table 10

*Teacher Characteristics*

	<i>School A</i>				<i>School B</i>			
	Instructional supervisors' (Total of 2)	Teachers (Total of 6)	Teachers in focus group (Total of 10)	Documents and records	Instructional supervisors' (Total of 4)	Teachers' (Total of 6)	Teachers' focus group (Total of 3)	Documents and records
Level of ability, knowledge and skills	✓ (2)	✓ (5)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (6)	✓	–
Being creative with instructional practices	✓ (2)	✓ (4)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (1)	✓	–
Commitment to professional learning and the school	✓ (2)	✓ (4)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (2)	✓	–
Being motivated and sustaining motivation	✓ (2)	✓ (5)	✓	–	✓ (2)	✓ (1)	✓	–
Being organized and completing and submitting work in a timely fashion	✓ (1)	✓ (3)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (2)	✓	–
Possessing adequate communication skills	✓ (2)	✓ (4)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (4)	✓	–
Being attentive and open to seeking help from peers and instructional supervisors	✓ (2)	✓ (2)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (5)	✓	–
Being a hard worker and possessing a passion for teaching	✓ (2)	✓ (4)	✓	–	✓ (2)	✓ (2)	✓	–
Adjusting to change in instructional practices	✓ (2)	✓ (1)	✓	–	✓ (3)	✓ (2)	✓	–
	✓ : mentioned		– : not mentioned/not available		( ) : Frequency of responses			

Frequency of participants who identified teacher characteristics.

***Instructional supervisors' perspectives.*** At school A, both instructional supervisors indicated that they guide teachers' professional learning based on teachers' 'background experience' and abilities. The first instructional supervisor noted that while both fresh graduates and experienced teachers have much to offer to instructional practice, she found that it was necessary to help these two groups of teachers professional learning based on their level of professional experience. In

general, the supervisor would offer fresh graduates and new teachers more professional learning guidance if they were lacking in certain abilities, knowledge, and skills. She also offered experienced teachers professional learning guidance while being mindful of their expertise and is far less overbearing in the support or guidance she offers them. At times however, some experienced teachers exhibited some resistance to adopting new and effective professional learning practices, so she would consistently work on challenging them to gradually try and test these new approaches to promote their professional learning.

The second instructional supervisor expressed similar views regarding the importance takeoff taking into consideration the varying levels in teachers' abilities, knowledge and skills among new teachers, fresh graduates and experienced teachers. She said, "I really can find the difference in the way to approach each one and help them in having an effective professional learning experience."

At school B, all instructional supervisors expressed similar views. The first instructional supervisor for instance revealed that in order to help a teacher grow professionally she must consider the teacher's: "level" in terms of abilities, knowledge and skills; the type of "diploma"/degree he/she holds; and his/her years of teaching "experience". She also stated that if teachers "proved" or "demonstrated a certain skill/ability", "you offer the position of coordinator" for example to acknowledge their expertise and to challenge them to take their professional learning experience to the next level. The first, second and fourth instructional supervisor both expressed that a teacher's proficiency in the subject matter affects teachers' professional learning. The second instructional supervisor indicated that teachers "definitely" "have to know the subject, as a firm grasp of the content will enable teachers to receive advanced professional learning."

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth teachers expressed that they are aware that their how their experience(s)- abilities, knowledge and skills- have become the bases for further development. The first, fifth and sixth teachers explained that abilities, knowledge and skills accumulated over the years, has enabled them to assess their needs better as well as plan steps for advancing their expertise. The focus group teachers agreed that teachers' level of ability, knowledge and skills influences teachers' professional learning experience.

At school B, all teachers re-counted that their abilities, knowledge and skills were gradually enriched due to the learning they have accumulated over the years in the classrooms with students, through interactions with peers and instructional supervisors and through professional learning opportunities. The third, fifth and sixth teachers suggested that abilities, knowledge and skills they have as well as the ones they are currently acquiring through workshops, peer learning, self-directed and guided learning are factors that determine the effectiveness of their professional learning. Focus group teachers corroborated that teacher characteristics are important to the success of teachers' professional learning.

**Being creative with instructional practices.** Participants described being creative and learning how to be creative with their instructional practices as a characteristic that promotes teachers' professional learning. Most participants reported that teachers needed to be creative with their instructional practices for the following reasons: students were bored with traditional teaching approaches; teachers have been teaching the same objectives using outdated or ineffective methods; when instructional resources and materials are insufficient or lacking; and in order to implement a new instructional strategy. At both schools all instructional supervisors, most teachers at school A (4 of 6) and few teachers at school B (1 of 6) discussed

this teacher characteristic as affecting teachers' professional learning. The second row in Table 10, on page 180, indicates the frequency of participants who mentioned this characteristic.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, the first instructional supervisor implied that teachers who are creative with instructional practices are learning professionally. The second instructional supervisor suggested a similar perspective claiming that teachers who are capable of creating their own instructional resources as learning. After demonstrating to teachers how to create educational movies using Movie Maker, she said that "we create our own movies" to make instruction more interactive, attractive for students as well as more impactful than traditional teaching methods.

At school B, the four instructional supervisors indicated that teachers' creativity is a desirable characteristic. And teacher who are considered creative are more likely to pursue professional learning opportunities as they were seen as 'open' to learn about new instructional methods. The fourth instructional supervisor noticed, for instance, that at department meetings creative teachers exhibited an enthusiasm for sharing creative methods they have learned and implemented with their peers. She explained, "Only when we started to meet to see what are the activities that we want to implement in the classroom, [did] they become more [creative]. Each one started to come up with new ideas [in relation to the instructional activities]. I mean they are making an effort, more effort so that instruction runs smoothly." The other three instructional supervisors indicated that the topic of "creativity" is discussed at every department meeting and that teachers are encouraged to become more creative in their instruction to achieve better student learning as well as to help them grow professionally.

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, the first, fourth, fifth and sixth teachers agreed that being creative with their instructional practices enhances their professional learning experience. The fourth teacher explained that her professional learning benefitted from having to work with minimal resources as this pushed her to learn how to be creative in her teaching. She said, "It made me very resourceful, I had to search for alternatives. So I had to be creative in certain things [activities, teaching strategies]." The first, fifth and sixth teachers expressed similar views adding that every day they 'figure out new things [teaching techniques]' and more successfully 'engage students in the activities' and such experiences with creative teaching methods enriches their professional learning. Focus group teachers agreed that teacher creativity influences teachers' professional learning experience.

At school B, only one teacher said that being creative is necessary in her department as there are not many resources or activities readily available for the subject matter teacher teach. In the Arabic department, she explained, teachers "don't always find ready things [activities, ideas]" to readily implement in their classroom, which obliges them to be creative in their planning and teaching. She believes that this characteristic enhances teachers' professional learning experience. Focus group teachers agreed that the nature of teaching thirty plus students requires creativity and improves their professional learning experience.

**Commitment to professional learning and the school.** Instructional supervisors and teachers described teachers' commitment to professional learning and the school as a fundamental component of teachers' professional learning experience. Teachers who are considered dedicated to the profession and keen on professional advancement were reported as being very successful teachers. All instructional supervisors at both schools, most teachers at school A (4 of 6) and some

teachers at school B (2 of 6) supported this teacher characteristic as important to teachers' professional learning. The third row of Table 10, on page 180, shows the frequency of participants who discussed this characteristic.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, both instructional supervisors pointed to teachers' level of commitment to professional learning and the school when they: willingly offered to present workshops to their peers; implemented new instructional practices that instructional supervisors recommended; directed their own professional learning; voiced their professional learning needs to instructional supervisors; reflected on their teaching; and regularly supported teachers who needed assistance with instructional practices. Moreover, both instructional supervisors emphasized that they not only observed teachers' level of commitment to the school and their professional learning- these teachers provided them willingly with regular feedback about their instructional work. The first instructional supervisor said, "When I offer teachers a variety of activities, and they apply them in their classrooms they come to me with feedback regarding whether or not it was successful." The second instructional supervisor for instance also said that when teachers invite her to come into their classrooms, for example, she feels that this indicates the teachers' keenness to demonstrate what they have learned. It is such actions that instructional supervisors found to indicate the level of teachers' commitment to the school and considered as indicator of their professional betterment.

School B instructional supervisors, the first and fourth, indicated that teachers' professional learning is more prominent in teachers who are committed to the school, especially in terms of adhering to: proper communication channels and procedures of communicating with colleagues; regularly sharing instructional work; as well as in



terms of committing to designing and implementing best teaching practices. The third instructional supervisor described better levels of professional learning in teachers who demonstrate a desire to “continue learning” on their own and through other professional learning opportunities. While the second instructional supervisor admitted that teachers’ professional growth would not be possible without their commitment to the department, the school and the students saying that he “cannot manage” without their input especially when it comes to new instructional practices. He implied that teachers’ learning stems from their desire to keep learning as they regularly communicate their professional needs and discuss workshops they want to attend.

*Teachers’ perspectives.* At school A, the second, third, fifth and sixth teachers spoke of their commitment to the school and their professional learning. The second teacher said that a teacher who is committed “does more than her job”. The third teacher spoke of her commitment to her students learning explaining that she wants to ensure that students understand the content and concepts of lessons before going home to complete homework. The fifth teacher referenced teachers’ dedication within her department saying, “We want to succeed” in instructional work and professional learning. The sixth teacher conveyed her commitment to the school and learning as she eagerly wants “to show her [the instructional supervisor] more” in relation to her teaching and professional learning. Teachers in the focus group agreed that this characteristic in teachers enhances their professional learning experience.

At school B, the third and sixth teachers spoke about commitment to the school and professional learning enriching their professional learning experience. In this respect, the third teacher said, “I try all the time to involve myself in workshops” especially off-campus workshops. She added that teachers are committed to the

school and that “they’re ready to learn” and “they have the will to do it” as long as they are offered appropriate professional learning opportunities that cater to their professional learning needs. Focus group teachers at school B supported this result—that teachers’ commitment to the school and professional learning as an important characteristic.

**Being motivated and sustaining motivation.** Participants at both schools believed that teachers’ motivation is a critical trait that promotes teacher professional learning experience. The participants discussed teachers’ varying levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as affecting teachers’ advancement in their careers. They also pointed to the ways instructional supervisors and teachers try to remain motivated when working under enormous pressure. All instructional supervisors at school A, and most at school B (2 of 4) discussed this teacher characteristic. Most teachers at school A (5 of 6) and one at school B (1 of 6) identified this characteristic as affecting teachers’ professional learning experience. The fourth row of Table 10, on page 180, represents the frequency of participants who discussed this characteristic.

***Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.*** At school A, the first instructional supervisor said that “the subject of motivation, how to keep teacher motivated” is her professional goal for the coming year as she believes that this effort on her part will further promote teachers’ professional learning. For this reason, the instructional supervisor explained that she tries to help teachers to find the right fit in the school—in terms of teaching position, the grade level they teach, etc., in order to boost the teachers’ motivation and fast-track their professional learning. The second instructional supervisor expressed similar views stating that “teachers need motivation” as teachers, especially those who have worked longest in the school “can

get bored” and at times they might consider “that this career may be [is] not matching their lifelong career [goals]”. As an instructional supervisor, she explained that she motivates each teacher differently and generally speaking based on two categories- “new teachers” (also fresh graduates) and “experienced” teachers. In her experience, she feels new teachers are “more motivated to prove themselves”, which speeds up their professional learning, and experienced teachers “are a bit bored” and need to be challenged. Overall, the supervisor insisted that teacher motivation can be renewed via professional day in-service training, off-campus workshops and department competitions centered on designing projects implementing new instructional strategies and techniques.

At school B, the first instructional supervisor explained the close connection between motivation and sustaining professional learning. She explained that she focuses on motivating her teachers when she guides teacher professional learning one-on-one which will peak the interests of each teacher in her department. The supervisor described teachers returning to her office “enthusiastic” with great feedback about their professional learning task and how they will implement what they learned in their instructional work and with their students. To sustain teachers’ learning the third instructional supervisor emphasized that he tries to motivate teachers by attending workshops, and described teachers who attend workshops frequently as more motivated as they are always learning something new. He said, “I mean [by attending] a workshop- or twice a year like this-it’s not a daily routine- so I always try always to go so that they’ll also [be] motivated to go.”

***Teachers’ perspectives.*** At school A, the first, second, fourth, fifth and sixth teachers described their motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, as positively affecting the quality of their professional learning effort. The first teacher implied

that when teachers are motivated to learn new information, they want to stay up-to-date with new advances in the field of instruction and education which fuels their successful advances in their professional growth as well as improvements in students' learning. The second teacher described herself as being very much intrinsically motivated and that finding success in her instruction is a motivating factor. She said, "I also helped my students love my subject more, because of the various activities that we do. And I also became more attached to learning and to teaching because of those good experiences that happened with me. So I am encouraged to even learn more." In her opinion, what makes professional learning more successful is when "You're interested in it [teaching], you have intrinsic motivation- yeah, it's something that comes from inside- you just can't put it in other teachers." The fourth, fifth and sixth teachers highlighted external factors as motivating them to learn professionally. The fourth teacher explained that when she is faced with an instructional challenge such as teaching an activity that requires resources that the school cannot provide, she is motivated to find a way- any way, to make the learning experience as effective for students. She stated, "You find it positive now because you can do anything you want with a simple paper clip and glass- yeah it has motivated me to find other solutions." The focus group teachers' confirmed that teachers' motivation and sustaining their motivation positively enriches teachers' professional learning experience.

At school B, one teacher explained that she is motivated to attend off-campus workshops and share what she has learned with her colleagues. The second teacher said, "I see what was good about it [the workshop] and I tell them [about the workshop content]." She also described that other motivated teachers in the department also share with peers what they have learned and what "caught their

attention”. She feels that such motivation encourages other teachers to try the new strategies and also attend off-campus workshops. The focus group teachers confirmed that teachers’ motivation and sustaining their motivation as important to enhancing teachers’ professional learning.

**Being organized and completing and submitting work in a timely fashion.**

At both schools participants emphasized that teachers who are more organized with their instructional planning and teaching and who respected deadlines, are more likely to successfully incorporate professional learning opportunities into their instructional work and instruction. Most instructional supervisors at school A (1 of 2) and all at school B identified this characteristic as important to teachers’ professional learning. Most teachers at school A (3 of 6) and a few at school B (2 of 6) mentioned this characteristic. The fifth row of Table 10, on page 180, depicts the frequency of participants who discussed this characteristic.

*Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.* At school A, the second instructional supervisor explained that she believes that exceptional organizational skills, preparedness and punctuality with work related deadlines are characteristics that facilitate teachers’ professional learning experience as they help teachers to be more focused and more able to optimize what they have learned.

At school B, all instructional supervisors agreed that organization, preparedness, and punctuality in teachers are necessary traits that enhance their professional learning experience. The second instructional supervisor for instance said, “In terms of focus, I think that they [teachers] have to be prepared for everything. Failing to prepare is preparing to fail” and the third instructional supervisor believes that these qualities in teachers not only enhances teachers’

professionalism but also makes teachers more receptive to new professional learning opportunities.

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, the second, fourth and fifth teachers described how being organized and timely with meeting deadlines as reducing work related stress and improving their receptiveness to professional learning activities. The second teacher expressed that she is mindful of being punctual to work and meetings as well as meeting deadlines and that this helps her maximize the benefits from her professional learning. The fourth teacher explained that what aids her professional learning is “coming to all meetings prepared” so that she is more engaged in topics being discussed as well as the planning process. The fifth teacher agrees with all views expressed by the second and fourth teachers. The focus group teachers corroborated this finding.

At school B, the first and sixth teachers spoke of being organized and timely in submitting work as enhancing their professional learning experience. The first teacher highlighted that she needed to amplify her organizational skills when learning how to plan a Project-Based Learning project, one of the school's professional learning goals. She explained that as all teachers needed to understand the general guidelines and applications of Project Based Learning in terms of planning and implementation, she needed to organize her work into manageable phases so that she could easily introduce the project idea and activities to students. The sixth teacher spoke about these characteristics in light of her day-to-day activities with peers and students. She said, “I mean you have to prepare to the last detail so that you don't lose control of the class.” Teachers in the focus group confirmed that being organized and timely with work related deadlines enhances their professional learning experience.

**Possessing adequate communication skills.** According to instructional supervisors and teachers at schools A and B, teachers' professional learning experience is enhanced when teachers' possessed good communication skills. Participants described communication among colleagues, instructional supervisors and administrators as essential to successfully accomplish any school related professional learning goals. All instructional supervisors at both schools discussed this characteristic. Most teachers (4 of 6) at school A and most at school B (4 of 6) mentioned this teacher characteristic. The sixth row of Table 10, on page 180, depicts the frequency of participants who discussed this characteristic.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, both instructional supervisors explained that effective communication at meetings among members, as well as communication with administrators reduced misunderstandings and allowed teachers to focus better on their instructional work. The first instructional supervisor believed that being able to communicate objectives and instructional targets effectively with colleagues increases teachers' level of understanding and professional learning. She said, "So exchanging experiences amongst each other allows them to clearly communicate how to apply a specific instructional skill. This allows them to develop a common understanding of these effective teaching strategies." According to the second instructional supervisor, teachers' professional learning experience is enhanced when they communicate effectively with instructional supervisors and administrators. She said, "I really find [that] communication is the most important thing" among teachers, instructional supervisors and administrators.

At school B, all instructional supervisors emphasized that teachers' communication skills are important to effectively learn. The supervisors implied that

teachers' communication skills, also helps teachers effectively exchange instructional advice especially new instructional strategies that they learned about through external workshops. Also all instructional supervisors explained that in addition to regular face-to-face communication, teachers' effective communication is maintained via email whereby they email their colleagues and instructional supervisors various documents related to instructional work such as tests, lesson plans, and even documents related to professional learning [workshop documents, instructional activities]. So the teachers need to express their ideas clearly to their colleagues and the instructional supervisors and touch base regularly to ensure that all involved parties have the same understanding with regards to the instructional work being addressed.

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, the first, second, fifth and sixth teachers described that their communication skills during coordination meetings and other times throughout the workday as important to improving the quality of their instructional work. The four teachers emphasized that communication skills are important to discuss instructional objectives as well as to share instructional strategies and information gained through external workshops. The fifth teacher for example said that at coordination meetings "We examine what we've accomplished so far. We discuss where we need to exert more effort, what we need to focus on more in terms of our goals- we are altogether discussing such things." In terms of sharing workshop information and documents, the fifth teacher said, "Workshops are beneficial when you are communicating with others, when you listen to the ideas of others, and you benefit from their experience, from the experience of others- and if they applied [a strategy] what gains did they experience, what were the outcomes." Focus group teachers at school A agreed that their ability to communicate amongst



each other and with instructional supervisors and administrators enhances their professional learning experience.

At school B, the second, third, fourth and sixth teachers agreed that having adequate communication skills enhances their professional learning experience. The second and third teachers emphasized that this year's communication among teachers centered on reaching a common understanding regarding how to write effective objectives as a way to enhance their delivery of instruction to students. The fourth and sixth teachers agreed that regular communication among teachers as well as how information is communicated is important to ensure that all instructional work is understood. The fourth teacher explained that communication via email became "mandatory" to share daily planning, tests, exams as well as to continue professional dialogue regarding instructional work and professional learning activities. The sixth teacher agrees with this view. Focus group teachers at school B agree that teachers who have adequate communication skills experience better professional learning.

**Being attentive and open to seeking help from peers and instructional supervisors.** Participants at both schools indicated that teachers who are attentive to their instructional work and professional learning experienced great professional learning gains. Also the participants revealed that teachers' professional learning benefits when teachers are open to resorting to asking for instructional advice and assistance related to instructional matters from their peers and instructional supervisors. All instructional supervisors at both schools discussed these teacher characteristics. Some teachers at school A (2 of 6), and most teachers at school B (5 of 6) reported these teacher characteristic as benefitting teachers' professional learning. The seventh row of Table 10, on page 180, represents the frequency of participants who discussed these characteristics.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, both instructional supervisors indicated that when teachers are attentive to their professional learning needs as well as open to seeking help from peers and their instructional supervisors they learn more. The first instructional supervisor observed that more experienced teachers are generally more attentive to students' needs and instructional planning, than new teachers to the school or fresh graduates. She thinks this is mostly due the fact that experienced teachers are more comfortable with their instruction and the planning process while new teachers and fresh graduates joining the school are still learning how to implement school procedures and teach well at the same time. So according to the supervisor, as the level of attentiveness to planning and teaching details and nuances mature, the more their professional learning experience at the school will benefit. The first instructional supervisor also implied that when teachers are open to seeking help regarding instructional matters from their peers and instructional supervisors they learn more. The second instructional supervisor explained when teachers' are attuned to their professional learning needs in order to improve their instruction and students' learning, they learn and become eager to grow professionally. She related that teachers sought her advice for assistance in their professional learning: "For example, this workshop I told you about Movie Maker, many teachers asked about this because they are weak in this area."

At school B, all instructional supervisors suggested that teachers seek help and advice from their peers and instructional supervisors and mostly during the department meetings. The second instructional supervisor agreed with this view and said that teachers frequently come to his office for instructional and professional learning advice. He said "I mean at any time a teacher calls me I'm here- so this is important I think" to enhance teachers' professional leaning experience at school.

Only the first and fourth instructional supervisors emphasized the importance of teachers' attentiveness as promoting their professional learning. The first and fourth instructional supervisors explained that in addition to teachers being attentive to details related to planning and classroom instruction, using the R.A.S. [Results Analysis Sheet], which following every student test and exam, increases teachers' level of attentiveness to students' learning needs. The R.A.S is designed to help teachers "pay attention to concepts and skills that students understood and acquired as well as those that they did not fully understand or acquire.

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, two teachers considered being attentive and open to seeking help from peers and instructional supervisors as a characteristic that promote teachers' professional learning experience. The fifth teacher explained that teachers are attentive to what they are learning when they participate in workshops as they "thoroughly examine each and every activity and for every [possible] learning outcome." The sixth teacher considered seeking instructional advice from her instructional supervisor as enriching her professional learning experience at school. She stated, "So when I explain to her [the instructional supervisor] for instance such a [challenging] student, 'What shall I do? I need help with such a student.' She gives me more handouts for him, challenging [instructional] ideas [activities] – just to manage the class." Teachers in the focus group verified that these teacher characteristics enhance teachers' professional learning experience.

At school B, the fifth and sixth teachers considered attentiveness in teachers as promoting their professional learning experience. The second, third, fourth and sixth teachers suggested for example that seeking other teachers' and instructional supervisors advice and help as enhancing their professional learning. In talking about

her relationship with her colleagues the second teacher said, “We work together we support one another, whenever I have a problem I go to them and I ask them and sometimes when there’s a problem you also go to the administration and you talk to them.” And the fourth teacher for example revealed that she has asked instructional supervisors’ help in terms of attending workshops related to “emotional intelligence” and “creating and active learning classroom” She added, “So we asked the principal if we can have a session like just to improve our skills, and she was open to that and she asked who’s willing [to participate in the training].” The third and sixth teachers expressed similar perspectives. The focus group teachers verified that being attentive and open to seeking help from peers and instructional supervisors is a teacher characteristic that promotes teachers professional learning.

**Being a hard worker and possessing a passion for teaching.** Participants at both schools reported that teachers who worked hard and possessed a passion for teaching enjoyed more meaningful professional learning experiences. All instructional supervisors at school A and most at school B (2 of 4) mentioned these teacher characteristics. Most teachers at school A (4 of 6) and some at school B (2 of 6) discussed these characteristics. The eighth row of Table 10, on page 180, shows the frequency of participants who discussed the characteristics.

***Instructional supervisors’ perspectives.*** At school A, the first instructional reported that a teacher’s passion for her/his job positively affects the teacher’s professional learning experience. The second instructional supervisor explained that teachers’ dedication and efforts at work improve teachers’ learning as such teachers are likely to manage their professional learning experiences around their busy schedules and implement the newly learned instructional strategies with their

students. She said, "...teachers are hard workers here" and "have lots of tasks to do [including] teaching" so teachers do their best to handle the "big teaching load".

At school B, the first instructional supervisor explained that a teacher's professional learning can only truly improve if he/she has a passion for teaching. She said, "He must love the profession [teaching]- it [professional learning] wouldn't do [without this love for [teaching]]." The fourth instructional supervisor also noted, that teachers in the department need to be truly working hard and dedicated to deliver quality instruction to students if they are to be learning.

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, the second, third, fifth and sixth teachers perceived hard work and a passion for teaching as important teacher characteristics that affect the teachers' professional learning gains. The second teacher expressed that she enjoys teaching more now due to good results in her teaching. She said, "I love my job- that's I think number one- I really love my job. I look forward everyday to what I'm going to do the next day in class." The third teacher believes that effective professional learning is not just applying what you have learned as an undergraduate or graduate, it also requires teachers "to work hard" by participating in various professional learning activities to add to and improve what they had already acquired in terms of abilities, knowledge and skills. On a personal level, the teacher explained that she attributes most of her teaching success to her hard work and love for the profession. She said, "I try to work hard with my students, ...I'm really proud of what I'm doing- really I'm proud". The fifth and sixth teachers agree with these perspectives and expressed a desire to be successful teachers. The focus group teachers agree that these teacher characteristics enhance teachers' professional learning experience.

At school B, the third teacher said that she attributes her successful professional learning to being a hard worker. She explained that she makes an effort to develop herself professionally by attending off-campus workshops, reading articles and doing research about effective instructional methods. The sixth teacher shared her professional history explaining that she started as a “simple teacher” who is self-taught, and due to her hard work and dedication to the profession was promoted to coordinator. She stated, “For example, I started as a teacher, I didn’t have experience in teaching I worked on improving myself...in what sense... I mean for example, I attended many [professional development] sessions. I read a lot, I do a lot of research, I look at everything that’s new [in education], I am always in the bookstores and I started as a simple teacher, and then from a teacher I moved on to become a coordinator because I worked hard on improving myself.” The focus group teachers verify that these teacher characteristics promote teachers’ professional learning.

**Adjusting to change in instructional practices.** Essentially all participants who reported this characteristic as important to a truly professional learning experience for teachers’ agree. Basically they explained that this characteristic in teachers is needed for advancement in teachers’ practices as well as to improve students’ learning. Participants only differed in the way they experienced this characteristic with teachers, as is the case with the instructional supervisors interviewed, or in themselves and their colleagues as is the case with the teachers interviewed. All instructional supervisors at school A, and most at school B (3 of 4) discussed this characteristic. Few teachers at school A (1 of 6) and some at school B (2 of 6) identified this teacher characteristic. The last row of Table 10, on page 180, shows the frequency of participants who discussed the characteristics.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, both instructional supervisors implied that teachers who adjust to changes in instructional practices experience accelerated professional learning than teachers who resist change or take longer to adopt the new practices. The first instructional supervisor indicated that there are a number of experienced teachers, who have worked the longest at the school, who are ready to accept change, and then there are a good number of them who resist change or take offense at the request. In general, the supervisor noted that all new teachers to the school, as well as fresh graduates, posed the least resistance to adjust to changes in instructional practices, as they are more willing to learn and impress their supervisors. The second instructional supervisor expressed similar views adding that a teacher's personality, general demeanor and attitude affects how she/he adapts to change. Both instructional supervisors agreed that overall, new teachers and fresh graduates readily adjusted to changes in instructional practices, which benefits their professional learning experience.

At school B, the first, second, and fourth instructional supervisors credited significant gains in teachers' professional learning because they adapt to change in instructional practices; albeit the instructional supervisors admitted that most teachers struggled to adapt, but when they did change, their instructional work improved. The second instructional supervisor for example explained that teachers' professional learning necessitates teachers adapting to changes in instructional practices. He added that all teachers in his department are willing to adapt to change and that this positive attitude has allowed the department to fulfill several important instructional goals especially those related to students' learning. The first and fourth instructional supervisor recounted the difficulty teachers faced when new instructional practices were introduced to teachers. The first instructional supervisor

said, “There are some of them who immediately feel comfortable and they accept [change]; there are some who are resistant to change- it is not easy.” The fourth instructional supervisor described similar views only adding that once teachers’ realize that past methods are no longer suitable for students of today are they more likely to adapt to change more quickly when suggested or recommended by their supervisors.

*Teachers’ perspectives.* At school A, only one teacher identified this teacher characteristic as important to her professional learning experience at the school. She explained that adjusting to changes in her instructional practices- due to student learning needs, availability of resources, as well recommended teaching practices- enhanced her professional learning. She described herself as more “resourceful”, “creative” and encouraged to finding “solutions” to instructional challenges. None of the other five teachers at school A recounted a similar experience nor did they discuss adapting to any changes in instructional practices recommended by their instructional supervisors. The focus group teachers agreed that this characteristic improves teachers’ professional learning.

At school B, the first and sixth teachers expressed that teachers who adjust to changes in instructional practices experienced improved professional learning. Both teachers emphasized that not all teachers adapted to changes in instructional practices at the same rate but overall their positive experiences with the new practices encourages them to seek more professional learning opportunities. For example, the sixth teacher explained that it took teachers time to accept seating their students in groups of four for group work as well as to implement a ‘Reading for Fun’ instructional practice. The first teacher related similar experiences to change adding that on a personal level adapting to change especially in terms of learning how to use



technology was challenging as she is still slow in typing, but overall she welcomes the change as she also uses the computer to communicate with her colleagues and research new instructional practices. The focus group teachers confirmed that this teacher characteristic enhances teachers' professional learning experience.

### **School Conditions and Context**

The availability or absence of certain school factors and conditions enhance or hinder the extent of teachers' professional learning experience. According to the results there are eleven school conditions and contextual factors, these include: availability of up-to-date resources and technology to support teacher' practice; well trained administrators and instructional supervisors; sufficient budget allocation for professional learning; high frequency of professional learning experiences; relevance and differentiation of professional learning experiences to teachers' needs; adopting school vision; availability of time; accommodating teachers' personal circumstances with regards to workload; work pressure draining teachers' ability to reflect on their learning; level of collegial support; and availability of teacher rewards and incentives.

Table 11, on the following page, represents the school conditions and contextual factors that participants identified as enhancing or hindering their professional learning experience.

Table 11  
*List of School Conditions and Context*

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Availability of up-to-date resources and technology to support teachers' practice
Well trained administrators and instructional supervisors
Sufficient resource allocation for frequent professional learning
Relevance and differentiation of professional learning experiences to teachers' needs
Availability of time
Work pressure draining teachers' ability to reflect on their learning
Level of collegial support
Availability of teacher rewards and incentives

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A representation of 'school conditions and contextual factors' identified by participants.

**Availability of up-to-date resources and technology to support teachers' practice.** According to the participants at both schools teachers' and instructional supervisors' availability of up-to-date resources and technology to support teachers' practice, considerably enhances teachers' professional learning. In general participants at school A indicated that up-to-date resources and technology were not readily available and this fact hindered teachers' professional learning experience. At school B most participants, with the exception of a few, indicated that the school provides teachers with any resources and technology that they may need. All instructional supervisors at both schools, all teachers at school A, and most teachers at school B (5 of 6) identified this school condition. The fifth row of Table 12, on the following page, shows the frequency of participants who identified this school condition.

Table 12  
School Conditions and Context

	<i>School A</i>				<i>School B</i>			
	Instructional supervisors' (Total of 2)	Teachers (Total of 6)	Teachers in focus group (Total of 10)	Documents and records	Instructional supervisors' (Total of 4)	Teachers' (Total of 6)	Teachers' focus group (Total of 3)	Documents and records
Availability of up-to-date resources and technology to support teachers' practice	✓ (2)	✓ (6)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (5)	✓	–
Well trained administrators and instructional supervisors	✓ (1)	–	✓	–	✓ (1)	–	✓	–
Sufficient resource allocation for frequent professional learning	✓ (1)	✓ (5)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (6)	✓	–
Relevance and differentiation of professional learning experiences to teachers' needs	✓ (2)	✓ (4)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (5)	✓	✓
Availability of time	✓ (2)	✓ (3)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (5)	✓	–
Work pressure draining teachers' ability to reflect on their learning	✓ (2)	✓ (3)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (5)	✓	–
Level of collegial support	✓ (1)	✓ (6)	✓	–	✓ (4)	✓ (5)	✓	–
Availability of teacher rewards and incentives	✓ (1)	✓ (1)	✓	–	✓ (2)	✓ (1)	✓	–

✓ : mentioned

– : not mentioned/not available

( ): Frequency of responses

Frequency of participants who identified school conditions and context.

***Instructional supervisors' perspectives.*** At school A, both instructional supervisors agree that availability of up-to-date resources and technology not only support teachers' instructional practices but also facilitates their professional learning experience; however, the supervisors voiced a concern about the lack of enough resources in the school. The second instructional supervisor said, “ Can you imagine, how hard it is to write new tests? So we need more books. We need more, for example animations we need experimental [resources and materials].” The

supervisor also believed that the school should be better equipped with technology. She stated, “So we have to have advanced technology because we are dealing with digital kids [students].” The first instructional supervisor expressed quite clearly the difficulties most departments are facing in the following quote:

“Because children are advancing so quickly [these days]... technology in the school... is not as advanced in comparison to other schools. We are trying to make-up for the lack in technology by creating activities to implement in the classroom. [So] this fact does not prevent us from let us say having [access] to the resource room; however, it is not available in the classroom. This is to say that anything technology related is not available in the classroom. We still use a blackboard and chalk. So we cannot advance [in terms of resources for many reasons that I will not get into right now.]”

The supervisor also explains that teachers are struggling to effectively reach students on a personal and instructional level due to this lack in resources and technology. She added:

“The issue of technology is increasing the distance between the teacher and students. So I need something to ‘join’ [bring together] the teacher and the students so that students feel assured that the teacher knows about technology and how to use the computer and ideas [related to technology and computers] and not only able to provide blackboards, chalk and CDs. In other words, I want there to be a clearer understanding between the spoken ‘language’ teachers use with students so students don’t view this teacher as someone who ‘comes from’ a different place and time.”

At school B, the instructional supervisors, the heads of departments and coordinators, seemed to agree that in general all resources teachers need are provided

to them. In terms of technology, most departments needed to work around a tight schedule to book the I.T. lab or resource room, and some to and from the classroom to the resource room, as well as a tight schedule as many other teachers would have already booked a time slot/slots, which also work well around other teachers' schedules. The second instructional supervisor described the availability of computers as enhancing teacher's work as they regularly access the school "portal" to post and send their instructional work. For instance, he explained that his department frequently uses the active board/LCDs to "make math fun for kids" for this reason the school might purchase more LCDs for specific teachers. All four instructional supervisors reported that heads of departments and or principals asked teachers to complete a request form regarding the resources and instructional material they would need. They also explained that the school provided teachers with all the resources teachers needed. The third instructional supervisor said, "The school is giving all of us the resources or the manipulatives that we need. We have in the department for every activity all the necessary tools that we need, and for the students to work, and every year the administration or the head of department will provide us with new catalogues in order to choose from them [the variety of instructional materials and resources]."

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, all six teachers reported that when up-to-date resources and technology are available instruction improves and their professional learning progresses. Four teachers, the first, fourth, fifth and sixth clearly indicated that they lacked resources and experienced inadequate applications of technology in instruction. The fourth teacher stated, "Especially here in the school we suffer from [a] lack of resources, lack of materials. In science mainly, we have a lot of materials needed for experiments, so requests are limited- not all things are

delivered to us. Some things we have to get. It is depressing because sometimes I have to change the activity that I'm supposed to do, so what's lost it's actually the teamwork." The fifth teacher expressed that the Arabic department lacks many instructional resources, despite this she decided to "... borrow [instructional] ideas from other subject areas like English- you take and you translate". On the other hand, the sixth teacher pointed out that professional learning for teachers suffers especially following participation in off- campus workshops. She explained that teachers couldn't implement the new instructional strategies without the instructional resources and materials recommended by the workshop presenters. Focus group teachers agree that availability of up-to-date resources and technology to support teachers' practices improves their professional learning experience at the school.

At school B, five teachers the first, second, third, fourth and sixth- talked about the availability of up-to-date resources and technology as enhancing teachers' professional learning experience. The second teacher said, "We do not [have enough resources] we have asked, we need to enrich our department, but up till now nothing has been done about this." Along the similar lines the fourth teacher stated, "Now we asked the administration and they provide resources to us. But even with such things [resources] maybe we should have some more orientation- a person who is an expert in those things... to help us implement them." The third and sixth teachers reported regularly updating instructional books to facilitate teachers' instructional practices. The fourth teacher expressed similar views with regards to limitations applying P.B.L. [Project Based Learning] projects as the school is not well equipped with the right resources and instructional materials, and if they are available, they are not enough and unreliable. Also the teacher suggested that active boards should be available in every classroom.

**Well trained administrators and instructional supervisors.** Instructional supervisors and teachers talked about the importance of administrators and instructional supervisors to receive training in instructional practices so as to be knowledgeable of the best and current instructional practices. Most instructional supervisors at school A (1 of 2) and few instructional supervisors at school B (1 of 4) mentioned this factor. None of teachers at either school discussed this aspect. The second row of Table 12, on page 204, represents the frequency of participants who cited this factor.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, only the first instructional supervisor indicated that administrators and instructional supervisors attend off-campus workshops to remain up-to-date with instructional practices in education as well as to decide if the workshop training would help teachers' professional learning. The first instructional supervisor stated, "...mostly the administration attends the workshops..." to learn and select appropriate professional learning opportunities.

At school B, the first instructional supervisor clearly indicated that administrators and instructional supervisors regularly participate in the in-service trainings. She said, "Last year we had a Professional Day... all the heads [of departments] and a big group of coordinators, and all the principals [met]. We worked on the organization [selection] of the same topic [related to the professional learning activities]." She explained that administrators and supervisors are matched with groups of teachers from different grade levels and who teach different disciplines to attend a common professional learning activity. Following the sessions, teachers, coordinators and heads of departments are required to present to their colleagues what they have learned, and their colleagues also present what they have

learned at their in-service training and plan for implementation of the instructional practices accordingly.

***Teachers' perspectives.*** At school A, none of the six teachers discussed instructional supervisors and/or administrators participating in off-campus workshops to advance their professional learning. Yet, at the focus group interview seven of the ten teachers agreed that administrators and instructional supervisors are well trained while the remaining three teachers disagreed with this result. No school A documents verify this practice.

At school B, none of the six teachers mentioned well trained administrators and supervisors as influencing their professional learning experience. The focus group teachers agree that well trained administrators and instructional supervisors positively influence teachers' professional learning experience.

**Sufficient resource allocation for frequent professional learning.**

Participants at both schools mentioned the school budget as a factor affecting their acquisition of resources, instructional material and technology and ultimately professional learning. Participants also indicated that more frequent participation in professional learning experiences generally enhances the extent of teachers' professional learning. At school A one participant indicated that the budget is limited thus hindering teachers' professional learning experience; while most participants at school B agreed the budget was sufficient thus enhancing teachers' professional learning experience. Most instructional supervisors at school A (1 of 2) and all instructional supervisors at school B (4) discussed this school condition. Most teachers at school A (5 of 6) discussed this school condition, and all teachers at school B (6) mentioned it. The third Table 12, on page 204, represents the frequency of participants who mentioned sufficient budget allocation.



*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, the second instructional explained that budget allocation for teachers' professional learning, especially in terms of purchasing resources, affects teachers' professional learning experience. She reported that while the school provides teachers with most resources to be able to complete instructional work satisfactorily the school budget does not permit them to purchase better instructional resources to improve and facilitate teachers' instructional work. She said, "...sometimes the budget is not ok because you know there are many things in the school- it's a big school. They give us of course the main things, but sometimes we like to improve ourselves." She added, that, as the frequency of workshops, overall, is not sufficient to sustain teachers' professional learning she needs to supervise teachers more frequently and offer guided professional learning. She stated, "The workshop [in-service training] is once per year. It's not enough at all. Teachers are bored. They are tired." She added, "So it's not enough at all to encourage [teachers' professional learning] them through workshops. I said that we need to give them [regular] feedback and we [instructional supervisors] need to give them [regular] feedback and we need to practice continuous supervision."

At school B, all four instructional supervisors reported that the high frequency of professional learning experiences has significantly contributed to teachers' professional growth. The first and second instructional supervisors agreed that teachers' professional learning is enhanced when the school budget is sufficient to cater to teachers' professional learning needs. According to the first instructional supervisor, "...in general the school covers the costs of these [off-campus] workshops...". She said, "...in many instances the school helps me financially so that teachers don't pay the fee of the [workshop training] sessions..."; she added, "Ok,

there are times when we ask teachers to pay a reduced fee just so that they feel that they are included. We create for them the financial context that will put them at ease so that they can attend the workshops.”

The first and second instructional supervisors also indicated that teachers frequently attend professional trainings at school and off-campus. The second instructional supervisor listed some of these professional learning opportunities, he said, “One, our school does it [in-service training]- once [per year] by the school, and we definitely have S.M.E.C. (Science and Mathematics Education Center) [off-campus training], ok I.C. [International College- school] [off-campus trainings]...about four, five workshops.” He specified that this is the average regularity of professional learning at his department, but is not certain about the frequency of professional learning opportunities at other departments. The third instructional supervisor acknowledged the importance of the continuity of teachers’ professional learning experience. He said that “Learning is a continuous process.” and that “Learning doesn’t stop at a level.” He indicated that workshops occur about “twice a year” and as there are not other professional learning practices as impactful as workshops on “a daily routine [basis]”, it is important to encourage teachers to participate in workshops to enhance their professional learning experience. The fourth instructional supervisor claimed that altogether there are three Professional Days for teachers. She said, “...every year there’s something new, we always have Professional Days about informative things [content rich].... [for example] about the R.A.S. [Results Analysis Sheet].”

***Teachers’ perspectives.*** At school A, five teachers, the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth indicated that the frequency of professional learning activities impacts their development. The second, fifth and sixth teachers agreed that the frequency of

professional learning activities is sufficient and positively impacts their professional growth. The second teacher explained that she learns new teaching “techniques” and “approaches” every day with her colleagues. She said, “So peer learning it happens a lot.... it is consistent” and added, “...there are a lot of workshops.... that we used to do with peers not only me.” The fifth teacher reported learning through guided professional learning and the professional literature that her instructional supervisor distributes to teachers. She stated, “... every now and then we might consider a topic and speak about it at a later date. We study it [and] we gather some information...”

While the second and fifth teacher agreed with this perspective, like the third, fourth and fifth teachers, she also explained that the frequency of external, off-campus, workshops are lacking. The second teacher said, “I guess I would love to attend more workshops outside [off-campus] to exchange thinking strategies and learning with other teachers.... so I guess more workshops outside my school would be great...”

The fifth teacher attributed attending less off-campus workshops to security issues in Lebanon. She explained, “...before the security issues started escalating, it [off-campus workshops] was more than now...it’s less now.” The fourth teacher reported that peer-observations did not happen at school and believed that this practice should happen more regularly. She said, “No here it [peer-observations] doesn’t happen...but I used to teach before in another school where it used to happen. [It is] very effective.” The focus group teachers agree that the high frequency of professional learning opportunities promotes better professional learning experiences for teachers. They also agreed that insufficient budget allocation for teachers’ professional learning needs, such as resources, lessened the effectiveness of their professional learning experience.

At school B, all six teachers expressed that a high frequency of professional learning opportunities positively affects teachers' professional learning experience. The sixth teacher reported that attending several off-campus workshops enhanced her professional learning. She said, "I didn't stop [attending]. If you see my file, each year I attend [sessions] and I also attended [a session] at Hagazian. In a year I attended at least five or six [off-campus workshop] sessions." The third teacher reported that off-campus workshops are completely voluntary, so teachers who do not attend off-campus workshops frequently miss out on many professional learning opportunities. She said, "Actually the same teachers who usually attend workshops every year are teachers who [keep] attending the workshops." Three teachers the second, third and the fourth expressed that frequency of these workshops and professional learning activities would be more effective if they offered teachers practical solutions to instructional challenges at their school and if there is focused continuity towards expanding the professional learning teachers have already gained. The second teacher recommended that more workshops and professional learning activities should be based on research done with students in schools in Lebanon. Like the second teacher, the third teacher agrees that while the high frequency of professional learning can positively impact teachers' professional learning, she feel that more workshops should educate teachers on practical and applicable instructional strategies that teachers can immediately put into effect, rather than struggle to learn how to implement impractical strategies that do not cater to the students' needs and to the schools' unique contextual needs. The fourth teacher expressed disappointment at the fact that teachers are requested to conduct research over the summer, present the research to the staff development officer, meet once to exchange the instructional methods each teacher has learned and their applications-

only to learn that there is no continuity or follow-up with regards to how these instructional strategies are being implemented by teachers in the department. The teacher said,

“I would have loved to have continuity in this research that we’ve done [over the summer]. I mean each one [teacher] to know what the others [teachers] have done [in terms of classroom applications] and to find [together] solutions maybe to the issues that are occurring at school, - if these themes that we researched are in line with the problems that are happening, so how can we effect it? So that it’s not just something we’ve only done for our intellect. No it [out professional learning] should have a more effective role.”

Furthermore, the third and sixth teachers explained that the school allocates a sufficient budget for teachers’ professional learning. The third teacher said, “...Even if there are like any courses like for example ...at Hagazian...they are willing to pay the entire fee...”. She also mentioned that when the time arrived for her to travel to the U.K. for teaching up-date courses in Brighton, “they [the school] paid half of the tuition of that trip”. The sixth teacher recounted a similar experience. She stated, “They [the school] brought them [trainers from the French Cultural Center] we did [the training] for the preschool [teachers] and the elementary [teachers] and the school paid three-quarters [of the training costs] and we [teachers] paid the quarter because it [the fee] was a big sum. I mean they [the school] provides for us.

The focus group teachers agreed that the high frequency of professional learning activities benefits teachers’ professional learning experience. Two focus group members agree that there is financial support for their professional learning needs; the other teacher did not observe this practice. No school B documents indicate the frequency of professional learning opportunities available to teachers nor

did they indicate the frequency of professional learning activities that teachers attended.

**Relevance and differentiation of professional learning experiences to teachers' needs.** Participants revealed teachers' professional learning benefits when the professional learning activities and experiences most closely match their professional learning needs. All instructional supervisors at both schools discussed this condition. Most teachers at school A (4 of 6) and most teachers at school B (5 of 6) talked about the impact of this condition on teachers' professional learning. The fourth row of Table 12, on page 204, represents the frequency of participants who related this condition.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, both instructional supervisors reported that the off-campus workshops that they have participated in so far are not relevant to teachers' professional learning needs. The second instructional supervisor stated, "Many times the workshops are repetitive. So we decide together that this is of no use...sometimes if the idea is interesting [or] we don't have an idea about something...so we decide which teacher will go..." In an effort to make up for the lack of variety in workshops that are suitable for the teachers, the supervisor differentiates professional learning by asking teachers what instructional strategies and topics they are interested in learning about to improve their instruction. Based on teachers' requests the instructional supervisor prepares presents a workshop or a series of workshops to cater to their needs. In the following quote, the first instructional supervisors reveals the problem with external workshops and recommends an alternative professional learning practice that addresses teachers' professional learning needs:

“... as most of the topics listed [for off-campus workshops] have already been covered [addressed] by our teachers- it is all known and there is nothing new. At a certain point, the teachers at our school know most of the teaching practices, as there is nothing new. What I find important are day-to-day issues that address the reality of our classrooms. For example if someone [a teacher] has an experience that he/she gained from an external [workshop], he/she can share with teachers... this is how I prefer workshops to run. Lecturing workshops that include some activities here and there are no longer useful. If there is something that can directly address teaching practices, this is what concerns us.”

At school B, all four instructional supervisors conveyed that particular attention needs to be paid to the relevance and differentiation of professional learning experiences to meet teachers’ professional learning needs and expectations. The first instructional supervisor reported that when experts were invited to conduct workshops for teachers at the school, she asks teachers to complete an evaluation form about the relevance and quality of workshops as well as evaluate the presenters’ presentation skills. The supervisor admitted that while the professional learning gains of off-campus workshops were often short-lived, she did not see any harm in teachers attending a workshop, even if the theme is familiar to teachers. She believes that teachers benefit no matter what, as “he [the teacher] comes back having refreshed” his knowledge and regained a “firm grasp” of the applications of the strategies learned at the workshop. The second, third and fourth instructional supervisors expressed similar views regarding the relevance and differentiation of teachers professional experiences. All three supervisors reported that the Professional Days at school catered to teachers’ professional learning needs.

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, four teachers, the second, third, fourth and sixth agreed that the relevance and differentiation of professional learning experiences to their needs enhances teachers' professional learning experience. According to the second teacher, "a truly effective professional learning experience" entails participating in workshops that offer practical instructional strategies that she "finds useful"; and when she implements these strategies, achieves "good results" with her students learning. Additionally, she explained that as her coordinator "presents... hands-on" instructional strategies at workshops and not "only theory", she is able to directly apply those "hands-on experiences and activities" in her class. The third teacher shared similar views revealing shops revealing that she is pleased with the variety and quality of off-campus workshops. The fourth teacher explained that off-campus workshops are selected "according to [the] needs" of teachers and the department. She said, "...coordinators would sit with us, discuss it [workshop options], and then we would decide if something is useful; then she applies for us to go..."; however, "... if it's something [workshop theme] that we already know, and we've already taken and we know details, then it's a waste of time." Unlike the other three teachers, the sixth teacher emphasized that she did not benefit from off-campus workshops whatsoever, especially because the strategies learned at the workshops often times requires certain resources and materials that her school simply does not have. She stated, "I'm telling you the truth. I only benefit from here more.... because it's more likely that we're talking about the students we are dealing with... it's applicable for our atmosphere as a whole. Other schools they have other environments, they have more resources.... to apply [certain instructional practices...materials and all these stuff that help in enhancing teaching in class."



The focus group members in general, agree that there is differentiation of professional learning experiences, but they suggested a different approach to differentiate professional learning experiences offered so that they are more suitable to teachers' individual professional learning needs. One focus group member said, "Talking about in-service training, this year they had a workshop about classroom management. They repeat it again the next year or next term and it isn't effective because we already did it [before]." She explained that while some teachers need and want to attend this in-service training, other teachers who already have superior classroom management skills should not be requested to sit through this workshop. She recommended administrators and instructional supervisors to take time to seriously read through each teacher's professional learning portfolio and plan workshops that challenge teachers who have already remarkable portfolios and cater to other teachers' professional learning needs. Furthermore, she explained that teachers want administrators and instructional supervisors of all departments to involve teachers in making choices related to their professional learning goals. Often times, teachers do not have a say or choice in the in-service training choices. All of the focus group members agreed with this recommendation adding that not all instructional supervisors involve their teachers in planning and selecting relevant professional learning experiences.

At school B, five teachers, the first, third, fourth, fifth and sixth, revealed that overall professional learning experiences are relevant and differentiated to promote teachers' professional learning experience. The first, fifth, and sixth teachers agreed that the school caters to their specific professional learning needs- for example ensuring that teachers who are computer illiterate become competent with a variety of computer softwares and other technology to facilitate their instructional work and

improve classroom instruction, as well as to offer teachers a variety of off-campus workshops. The first and fifth teachers preferred in-service training, as they believed the workshops are practical to the school context. The first and fourth instructional supervisors conveyed that as teachers across different disciplines needed to cooperate and collaborate on a common project plan, teachers were able to better understand what skills and abilities each individual teacher is bringing into this common project and learn about different instructional practices. The third, fifth, and sixth teachers expressed that workshops could be more relevant if they teach “practical” and “child-centered” instructional strategies that they can directly implement in their classrooms. The fourth teacher expressed that the team of instructional supervisors do try to differentiate teachers’ professional learning experiences but are unsuccessful because they are unfocused and inconsistent and then move on to other professional learning experiences. An example mentioned before is the one related to summer professional learning research. She described this experience as a waste of teachers’ rest time when after presenting findings to the Staff Development Officer and teachers in the department there is no follow-up regarding whether or not these practices are effective and being implemented which diminishes teachers’ professional learning efforts. The focus group members agree that this practice takes place and reported similar challenges regarding implementing a V.C.T. project at school. They also expressed that some in-service workshop content is repetitive because the school does not take into consideration which teachers are competent in certain fields. Because in-service training is mandatory for all teachers, they recommended that in-service training be more differentiated to cater to teachers with common professional learning needs. Some school B documents corroborate the

variety of professional learning experiences offered to teachers. These documents are mentioned on pages 110.

**Availability of time.** The issue of the availability of time was also reported as impacting teachers' professional learning experience. In general participants agree that a lack of time does not allow teachers to pay particular attention to their professional learning needs. All instructional supervisors at both schools reported the lack of time due to workload pressures as affecting teachers' professional learning experience. Most teachers at school A (3 of 6) and most teachers at school B (5 of 6) discussed this factor. The fifth row of Table 12, on page 204, represents the frequency of participants who reported this factor.

***Instructional supervisors' perspectives.*** At school A, the first instructional supervisor attributed the lack of time to implement certain professional learning activities as adversely affecting teachers' professional learning. She explained that at one point teachers were so overwhelmed with the lack of time to learn new instructional skills that they no longer bothered to address the issue. Recognizing teachers' frustration, the supervisor encouraged teachers to share with her their professional learning needs so that she may prepare and present a workshop. What's more, both instructional supervisors explained that accommodating teachers' personal circumstances with regards to workload enhances teachers' professional learning experience. The second instructional supervisor explained that teachers often face unexpected circumstances or have a specific family situation and cannot attend certain workshops. She said, "...so we decide which teacher will go according to her family situation.... I respect this. I don't judge that if she doesn't go, then it means that this is it, she's not going to improve herself... of course we have to be a

little bit... accommodating.” The first instructional supervisor agrees with this perspective. She explained,

“...all teachers at times feel down and then bounce back, just like any other profession...we have to take into consideration societal factors, psychological factors, family issues among other things- this is where I can assist if a teacher cannot continue teaching for some reason like a death [of someone close], I go into her class and teach. I tell her ‘Ok, you can rest’ and I take over her class.”

At school B, all instructional supervisors the lack of time is a factor that affects teachers’ professional learning experience. Both instructional supervisors are heads of department and they described their inability to follow-up with every teacher across all departments due to the many other responsibilities they have at school. The first instructional supervisor said that she is always busy and “cannot read so many lessons plans” but tries make up for the lack of time when she can by accessing some lesson plans on the portal, by meeting with the coordinators, and by observing teachers. The second instructional supervisor also expressed that he “cannot see all the teachers in this [elementary] department” but on one-to-one basis, he makes himself available to teachers to attend to their specific needs. Also all instructional supervisors agree that accommodating teachers’ personal circumstances regarding the workload is necessary to promote teachers’ professional learning. In the following quote, the first instructional supervisor reveals what the school does to accommodate teachers’ personal circumstances. She stated:

“Now the problem lies in our education system, you know that the salaries are not ‘wow’ [great]... you know that the work hours are ‘heavy’ [heavy workload]- what does the school do? The school first of all offers the teacher his rights for sure. The school first of all offers the teacher his rights for sure.

The school takes into account the teacher's personal circumstances...sometimes you are not filling up his contract to the maximum [in terms of teaching hours and responsibilities] and you tell him 'Benefit from these five hours [that you have gained] in order to do this job well.'"

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, three teachers, the first, third, and fifth indicated that the availability of time enhances their professional learning experience as it allows them to successfully: meet instructional objectives; build better relationships with students; and implement new instructional practices. The third teacher did recount one experience where her personal circumstances with regards to workload were not accommodated. The teacher explained that it is taxing, both mentally and physically, to prepare a workshop for her colleagues and still attend to her instructional responsibilities. The school did not accommodate for this fact- her workload was not reduced and she did not receive any form of support. She believed that in order to support her professional learning, the school should accommodate for her personal circumstance. She said, "It was exhausting since although I have to work on this workshop, at the same time I have other responsibilities and nothing was cancelled [reduced] everything remained the same." The focus group teachers, however, indicated that the lack of time is a factor that hinders teachers' professional learning experience.

At school B, five teachers, the first, second, third, fourth and fifth, agreed that the lack of time hinders their professional learning experience. The first teacher, for instance, said that they often learn new practices but the allowed time hinder their ability to implement them. She added, "...in the school they love activities, but due to time constraints we sometimes don't manage to do the activities. Our period is three-quarters of an hour-especially in French we have five periods a week...". The other

four teachers expressed similar perspectives regarding the lack of time to apply newly learned instructional activities and practices. The second teacher revealed that her instructional supervisor is very busy with other functions in the school and does not have the time to meet with teachers. She stated, “The head of department is new but does not have time to meet with the teachers...she should be available if I have a question.” What’s more, the second teacher reported taking most of her work home, and this interferes with her personal space and her family life. She said, “...because we have a lot of work... I cannot do many things [professionally].... I would like to do many things [personally]...I start saying, ‘I wish the day was longer that twenty-four hours’, because sometimes we sleep at one o’clock a.m. ... not sometimes... always. We have corrections of work, we have households, I mean we have families.... we don’t have time to relax.” Additionally, the teacher explained that teachers do not have release time during the school day to attend several off-campus workshops- many of which, she believes are of value, simply because the workload is overwhelming and the school does not accommodate for workshops during the school work week. The fourth teacher believes that for professional learning to improve “it’s important to find the time first of all”. She added, “ I mean the most significant factor that prevents us from really advancing professionally is maybe because we no longer have time...especially due to the heavy workload...we feel like we are suffocating, we don’t have time to be acquainted with something [instructional practices] new.” All focus group members agree that the lack of time negatively affects teachers’ professional learning experience.

**Work pressure draining teachers’ ability to reflect on their learning.**

According to the participants there is general agreement that excessive work related pressure negatively impacts teachers’ ability to reflect on their learning. All

instructional supervisors at both schools identified this school condition. Most teachers at school A (3 of 6) and most teachers at school B (5 of 6) discussed this school condition. The sixth row of Table 12, on page 204, represents the frequency of participants who reported this condition.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, both instructional supervisors acknowledged that the unrelenting pace of work and pressure adversely affect teachers' ability to reflect on their learning which they believe negatively impact the quality of professional learning. The first and second instructional supervisors expressed that what interferes with a teacher's professional learning experience is "if she feels that she is working a lot" and the teacher cannot give attention and time to her professional growth. The second instructional supervisor reported that "...sometimes because of this load" teachers experience "stress" especially when it comes to meeting several deadlines related to instructional work. Despite providing her teachers a structure to work with to reduce the work pressure, the pace of work does not give teachers enough time to reflect on their learning as they are dealing with many instructional tasks at the same time and teaching. So according to her, teachers cannot successfully reflect on their learning in such circumstances.

At school B, all four instructional supervisors recounted that it is challenging for teachers to reflect on their practice due to the work pressure; and this significantly lessens the effectiveness of teachers' professional learning experience. The first instructional supervisor explained that it is unreasonable to expect teachers to advance on their own professionally without the proper support and a school system in place that allows teachers to do so despite work pressures. She stated, "...if you work twenty hours or thirty hours in a week, I would be 'without a mind' if I ask

you to participate in your own continuous professional learning on your own.... in reality, if you are married and returning home, you need to cook, and you need to correct and organize the house- this is not a life. [So] you need to create a system where you can apply this form of professional development and have this human live as well.” The second, third and fourth instructional supervisors agree with that it is difficult for teachers to reflect on their own learning because they have to attend to their instructional work and teaching.

*Teachers’ perspectives.* At school A, three teachers, the first, second and fifth agreed that work pressure affects teachers’ ability to reflect on their learning. The first teacher expressed that she is able to reflect on her learning and said, “...you see, we are not over worked- pressured with time... what’s important is meeting the objectives.” The second teacher reported the pressure of work reducing her ability to reflect on her learning as she is “over loaded with work” and “there are too many demands”. The fifth teacher agrees with this perspective adding that “special case students”- students with learning difficulties and behavioral problems add to her work pressure, as she needs to address these students’ needs. These factors make it even more challenging for her to successfully implement certain effective instructional practices in her classroom. The focus group teachers agree with this school condition as adversely affecting teachers’ professional learning experience.

At school B, five teachers, the first, second, third, fourth and fifth, agree that the work pressure drains their ability to reflect on their learning. The third teacher reported that she is “overloaded”, that there is immense “pressure” during the school day, and that class time is being wasted on “paperwork”- all these factors affect her professional learning experience. In the following quote, the third teacher describes the school day pressure that she experiences. She said:



“[There are] around thirty-three students in class and this causes a lot of pressure on kids and on the teacher herself... you avoid doing activities or you avoid certain methods that involve active learning because of the number of students. They cannot move in class properly, so you have to keep them in one place the whole time to avoid discipline problems and the chaos. You know they’re packed in the classroom; they’re packed in the playground. So this affects them a lot with the way they behave. They’re always hyper... like you feel they want to ‘explode’ at any point [out of control].”

To add to this experience, the teacher explained how paperwork has also affected her ability to reflect on her learning. She added:

“...Lately the whole system has changed. It’s all paperwork about filling in paperwork. You know you have to give reports on every single thing you do now.... like for example when I go to my class I have to write if somebody wants to go to the nurse. Then I have to write in the weekly schedule book what I taught them.... and I have forty minutes, plus the R.A.S..... it’s a burden actually.”

The other four teachers, the first, second, fourth and fifth described similar pressures that interfere with their classroom time and their ability to reflect on their learning. The second teacher also mentioned other forms of paperwork that “needed” to be filled on the spot in class for every class. One of these forms is the attendance sheet and it is completed for every single period throughout the school day. Other forms that were mentioned included late slips and bathroom passes. All of these forms need to be filled by the teacher. The fifth teacher also explained that there is too much pressure on completing the syllabus rather than an emphasis on teaching the objectives well. Focus group teachers agree that work pressure drains teachers’

abilities to reflect on their learning. No school B documents support this school condition.

**Level of collegial support.** At both schools, instructional supervisors and teachers reported that a high level of collegial support positively affects teachers' professional learning experience. Most participants talked about teachers sharing professional knowledge and assisting one another. Most instructional supervisors at school A (1 of 2) and all instructional supervisors at school B mentioned this contextual factor. All teachers at school A and most teachers at school B (5 of 6) discussed this factor. The seventh row of Table 12, on page 204, shows the frequency of participants who identified this factor.

*Instructional supervisors' perspectives.* At school A, only one supervisor the first, described collegial support as a factor that enhances teachers' professional learning experience. She recounted that when she first started in her position as coordinator, teachers were not working as team and supporting one another. So, the supervisor encouraged teachers to exchange instructional ideas, support each other in instructional tasks and even participate in peer-observations. She said, "...I want the teachers to work as a team. So I want them to observe each other and feel that they are helping each other grow professionally...".

At school B, all four instructional supervisors emphasized that the level of collegial support at their school enhances teachers' professional learning experience. The instructional supervisors mentioned collegial support in the following contexts: at department meetings; bridging meetings; on Professional Days; working on the V.C.T. projects and informally to help one another with instructional work. The third instructional supervisor stated, "We work as a team usually not individual work...we give remarks together to enhance instructional work... to achieve better results in it."

The first, second and fourth instructional supervisors expressed similar views regarding the significance of collegial support in promoting teachers' professional learning.

*Teachers' perspectives.* All six teachers at school A agree that a high level of collegial support positively affects their professional learning experience. The first teacher explained:

“We are honest about things that are happening with us... we don't hide the problems or ignore them... we talk about things openly, and we ask for help from each other... I feel that it helps us. May be because we have also been together for a long time, we know each other very well. This atmosphere is comfortable and it keeps a person advancing and improving to ask for help and not feel ashamed about it... to a great extent we collaborate.”

All five teachers, the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth teachers reported similar descriptions with regards to collegial support. Focus group teachers agree and expressed similar views. No school A documents support this factor.

At school B, five teachers, the first, second third, fourth, and sixth, indicated that collegial support is necessary for a truly effective professional learning experience. The fourth teacher explained that teachers worked as a “team” and that a high level of “collaboration among teachers” is needed to “work together in order to accomplish instructional goals by the end of the [school] year”. The other four teachers agreed citing other factors, such as: a “...great understanding among... teachers”; having good work relationships with peers; “teamwork” and a “good atmosphere” in the department. All focus group teachers agree that collegial support enhances teachers' professional learning experience.

**Availability of teacher rewards and incentives.** According to some participants the availability of teacher rewards and incentives positively affects teachers' professional learning experience. Incentives such as teachers' salaries and professional learning competitions were mentioned as well as receiving certificates, medals and trophies. Most instructional supervisor at school A (1 of 2) and most instructional supervisors at school B (2 of 4) cited this contextual factor. One teacher at school A and one teacher at school B reported this factor. The eighth row of Table 12, on page 204, shows the frequency of participants who recognized this factor.

***Instructional supervisors' perspectives.*** At school A, only one instructional supervisor, the second, mentioned that professional learning competitions served an effective incentive for teachers to advance professionally. She truly believed that such competitions should be continued in the school as they really motivated teachers to work out of their comfort zones and learn new instructional approaches that are appropriate for the school context and that could be applied in their classrooms. She said, "So they [teachers] have a chance to participate in a kind of [professional learning] competition... they [administrators] set up a competition for all the teachers. So the teachers who had the best ideas their work was displayed for all other teachers in the school... the teacher who was excellent... was the experienced teacher and not the new teacher. So she won...and we received a trophy...her and I."

At school B, two instructional supervisors, the first and the second, reported that incentives are effective in promoting teachers' professional learning. The second instructional supervisor mentioned teachers' salaries are not representative of their education, skills, and the number of hours they invest in their jobs. Hypothetically speaking, he explained, "I would increase their salaries... it is an incentive";

however, as he is not in the position to do so, he focuses on maintaining a great relationship with the teachers. The first instructional supervisor discussed a professional learning activity that offers teachers a certificate that indicates a certain level of proficiency in, for example, speaking and writing the French language. Referring to the certification process, she explained, "...towards the end they will take another test after which they receive a certificate or diploma [stating] that this teacher who attended this workshop [training] session beginning at this level and has achieved the following [level]...this is the certificate, diploma that shows that he is capable of this ability." She added, "I will tell him [the teacher] 'Bravo and I congratulate you. Next year I want you to achieve two Xs' certificates' [indicating a higher level]."

*Teachers' perspectives.* At school A, only one teacher, the fourth, described incentives as promoting teachers' professional learning experience. She explained that she participated in a professional learning competition with her colleagues at school. The product of her learning was an instructional scientific video using Movie Maker. She stated:

" [The] video was shown and we got a reward for it. So there were rewards, they distributed rewards, medals and certificates... it was a lot of work but taking credit for it at the end was really something nice. They [administrators] were motivating us... so being rewarded just even with a certificate or a medal was really nice and pushed you forward in achieving better."

All focus group teachers agree with this practice as being effective on teachers' professional learning, but they explained that it is not consistent.

At school B, only one teacher, the sixth, mentioned incentives as a factor that enhances teachers' professional learning experience. She explained that she along

with other teachers participated in a training course that distributed certificates to teachers indicating their level of proficiency in speaking and writing the French language. She said, “they [teachers] received certificates that they are at this level... they have more confidence in themselves and some of them started at level B and now they are at level A... this improvement allowed them to have greater confidence in themselves and this is better for the child [student].” The focus group teachers agreed that the availability of teacher rewards and incentives enhances teachers’ professional learning.

# CHAPTER V

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Qualitative multiple-case study design and methods were used to collect and analyze data to understand the role of instructional supervisors in promoting teachers' professional learning at the two large private schools in Lebanon selected for this study. Together with the instructional supervisor roles, other factors that enhance or hinder teachers' professional learning experience were also investigated at schools A and B. The research questions leading this study aimed to reveal specific insights pertaining to instructional supervisors' and teachers' interpretations of the role of the instructional supervisor in promoting teachers' professional learning, as well as to uncover factors that impact teachers' professional learning experience. Another outcome of this study is a comparative analysis of the perceived role and factors established from the results obtained from the participating schools in the Lebanese context and the theoretical role and factors shaped by the literature.

The chapter begins with the discussion section followed by the conclusion. Lastly, the chapter closes with recommendations for practice and for future research.

### **Discussion**

This section discusses results attained through the two stages within case findings and cross-case themes. The main purpose is to situate the main findings against the framework of the available literature on instructional supervision. The discussion section includes the following three main sections: a comparison of instructional supervisors' and teachers' understandings of the perceived role of instructional supervisors in promoting teachers' professional learning and of the

factors affecting teachers' professional learning experience; the comparison of the perceived role with the theoretical role of instructional supervisors' in promoting teachers' professional learning; and a comparison of the perceived factors affecting teachers' professional learning with those discussed in the literature.

### **Comparative Analysis of Teachers' and Instructional Supervisors' Perspectives on the Instructional Supervisor Role in Promoting Professional Learning**

This section examines the similarities and differences between the perceptions of instructional supervisors with those of teachers with regards to the role of instructional supervisors in enhancing teachers' professional learning. While participants agree on a number of instructional leadership roles that promote teachers' professional learning, differences emerged in the participants' unique interpretations of how these roles need to be carried if they are to promote teachers' learning. Though there were quantitative differences in terms of the number of respondents from each group who mentioned a certain role characteristics or factors (see Appendix E, page 271; & Appendix F, page 272), the discussion below will mostly focus on the qualitative differences that were discerned in the participants' responses. Participants from both groups identified the following instructional supervisor roles as promoting teachers' professional learning: being a liaison; fostering trust; encouraging participation in decision-making; supporting teachers' instructional practices; and evaluating instructional practices. Furthermore, a subset of each of these roles will be discussed. The subset of functions that signify areas of similarities between participants' perspectives are: communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers (for the role of 'being a liaison'); being a leader/role model for teachers (for the role of 'fostering trust'); and guiding teachers through regular follow-up (for the role of 'supporting teachers' instructional



practices’). The subset of functions that reveal areas of differences between participants’ perspectives includes: encouraging and acknowledging teachers’ professional learning gains (for the role of ‘fostering trust’); being available to teachers and listening to their concerns (for the role of ‘fostering trust’); and assessing teachers’ professional learning needs (for the role of ‘evaluating instructional practices’).

**Areas of similarities.** Instructional supervisors and teachers expressed similar views for the following instructional supervisor functions: communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers (for the role of ‘being a liaison’); being a leader/role model for teachers (for the role of ‘fostering trust’); and guiding teachers through regular follow-up (for the role of ‘supporting teachers’ instructional practices’). Each of these functions will be explored in order to understand what the similarities in perceptions reveal about the perceived role of instructional supervisors in the Lebanese context.

***Communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers.***

Instructional supervisors believed that their role as liaison in fulfilling this function helps promote teachers’ professional learning. They perceived that clear communication among administrators, instructional supervisors and teachers, is key in ensuring that expectations are understood and met. Teachers also viewed this function as promoting their professional learning, as clear communication of directives and decisions sets them in a favorable situation to better align their instructional and professional learning goals with school goals and standards.

***Being a leader/role model for teachers.*** Instructional supervisors believed that being a leader and a role model to teachers promotes teachers’ professional learning. They perceived that being respectful towards teachers, inviting teachers to try new

practices, modeling dedication, as well as up-dating their own professional learning fosters strong trusting relationships between them and teachers. Teachers revealed that this instructional supervisory function inspires them and promotes their professional learning experience. When instructional supervisors demonstrated desirable leadership qualities and modeled instructional practices teachers emphasized that they were increasingly encouraged to engage more intently on their professional learning pursuits and demonstrate the abilities and knowledge they have acquired.

***Guiding teachers through regular follow-up.*** Instructional supervisors perceived this function as promoting teachers' professional learning because teachers look up to them as a source of instructional knowledge. They noticed that this function promoted professional learning because teachers receive instructional advice and support- and regular follow-up facilitates the application of instructional practices. According to teachers, receiving guidance and follow-up from their instructional supervisors exceptionally furthers their professional learning. They reasoned that they learn when instructional supervisors introduce them to a variety of new instructional strategies; give them helpful advice; and when possible, demonstrate instructional strategies to enable their implementation in classrooms.

**Areas of differences.** Instructional supervisors and teachers voiced different perspectives for the following instructional supervisor functions: encouraging and acknowledging teachers' professional learning gains (for the role of 'fostering trust'); being available to teachers and listening to their concerns (for the role of 'fostering trust'); and assessing teachers' professional learning needs (for the role of 'evaluating instructional practices'). These functions will be discussed to provide

insight on what these differences indicate about instructional supervisors' perceived role on promoting teachers' professional learning in the Lebanese context.

***Encouraging and acknowledging teachers' professional learning gains.***

Instructional supervisors perceived that encouraging teachers as positively enhancing teachers' professional learning. They reasoned that teachers are motivated to learn professionally when they receive verbal/written praise and other incentives such as certificates and awards. Additionally, they perceived such forms of encouragement and acknowledgement as effectively boosting teachers' sense of accomplishment in their professional growth thus making them more likely to continue learning and take more instructional risks. While teachers found encouragement and acknowledgement important, several teachers emphasized more the effect of the absence of this function explaining that it is leading them to feelings of disappointment and disregard. This might be due to the fact that teachers perceived this function as absent or scarcely practiced by supervisors despite their declared belief in its importance to teacher professional learning. Teachers specifically emphasized that what impacts their learning in their opinion is the presence of more incentives, extrinsic rewards and regular praise from their supervisors.

***Being available to teachers and listening to their concerns.*** Instructional supervisors believed that being available to teachers and listening to their concerns enhances teachers' professional learning. They explained this function as an important component of trusting relationships with teachers. They perceived that this function helps them gain teachers' trust and better understand and meet teachers' professional learning needs. However, teachers observed that though important, being available and closely involved with teachers does not always lead to promoting teacher professional learning. They pointed out that the quality of this presence is

critical to warrant its positive impact. According to teachers, instructional supervisors' presence, was at times counterproductive to promoting their professional learning due to supervisors' character flaws such as being 'strongly opinionated' and 'inflexible' about certain instructional practices. These character traits were perceived as off-putting, uninspiring and as straining the professional relationship between instructional supervisors and teachers. Accordingly, teachers believed that their instructional creativity and professional advancement were limited due to ridged personality types in some instructional supervisors. Teachers explained that the fact that instructional supervisors are busy with other school tasks that extend beyond their role as supervisor, as adversely affecting their professional learning.

*Assessing teachers' professional learning needs.* Instructional supervisors believed that they successfully fulfilled this function, which promotes teachers' professional learning. Other than asking teachers about their professional learning needs, instructional supervisors perceived that their close working relationship with teachers in addition to classroom observations helps them select appropriate individual and group professional learning opportunities and activities for teachers. While teachers noted the importance of this function, not all believed that in the context of their schools it is a necessary condition that promotes their professional learning. Teachers explained that instructional supervisors are not always capable of and well informed with regards to their professional learning needs. According to them, they have often experienced feelings of boredom, being under challenged or over-whelmed during ill chosen in-service training that was not meeting their professional learning needs. They attributed that to a poor 'fit' or 'match' between their needs and what the school and the instructional supervisors believe these 'needs' are. They also pointed out that for the assessment of their needs to have a

positive impact on their learning, instructional supervisors should not only be limited to classroom observations; rather, instructional supervisors also need to dedicate time to read through their professional learning portfolios and appraisal forms in order to avoid designing irrelevant in-service training that teachers perceive as hindering professional learning. Moreover, teachers explained that instructional supervisors could not have a positive impact on the teacher's learning in that they are not themselves proficient in the areas that are identified as capacities for improvement in teachers. This seems to be the case especially with new practices where teachers noted that it is key that instructional supervisors themselves learn how to implement the newly introduced instructional strategies before expecting their teachers to do that- something the teachers noted as critical to promoting teachers' learning.

### **Comparative Analysis of Teachers' and Instructional Supervisors' Perspectives on Factors Promoting Professional Learning**

This section examines the similarities and differences of the perceptions of instructional supervisors with teachers with regards to factors affecting teachers' professional learning. On the whole, participants identified factors pertaining to the design of professional learning activities, aspects related to teacher characteristics, and certain contextual school conditions as enhancing or hindering teachers' professional learning experience. The following three factors, related to the design of professional learning activities, show areas of similarities between participants' perspectives: self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology; professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection on practice; and continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction. With regards to areas of differences between participants' perspectives, the following two factors, related to school conditions and

context, indicated discrepancies: well trained administrators and instructional supervisors; and the relevance and differentiation of professional learning experiences to teachers' needs.

**Areas of similarities.** Based on the results, instructional supervisors and teachers agreed that the following three professional learning activities positively affected teachers' professional learning: self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology; professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection on practice; and participation in continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction. A closer examination of these perceptions will be discussed to understand the implications of these factors in private schools in the Lebanese context.

*Self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology.* Instructional supervisors and teachers, expressed similar perspectives with regards to the positive effect self-directed learning has on teachers' professional learning. Instructional supervisors perceived teachers' drive to advance their professional knowledge- related to instructional practice and technology (as it applies to instruction)- through research and participation in additional training, as important practices for teachers' continuous learning and the improvement of the quality of instruction. Teachers also believed that this form of professional learning is effective because they are personally interested and invested in what they are learning. Teachers found that resorting to professional books, magazines, and a variety of Internet websites for personal and professional enrichment on instructional practices as improving instructional planning, teaching, and professional learning.

***Professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection on practice.***

Participants from both groups perceived engaging in professional dialogue and reflection on practice as promoting teachers' professional learning. They noticed that participating in professional dialogue to discuss instructional practices with others helps develop a common understanding of what they are trying to achieve.

Furthermore, participants believed that referring to instructional practices and strategies by their technical name is a factor that helps build a common knowledge of expected professional language, which contributes to improved professional learning. Both instructional supervisors and teachers perceived improvements in teachers' professional learning when supervisors regularly guide teachers to reflect on their practice to identify professional strengths and weaknesses.

***Continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction.*** Teachers and instructional supervisors alike perceived continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction as successfully promoting teachers' professional learning. Instructional supervisors especially found peer-observations enhancing teachers' learning because teachers offer each other instructional tips and advice pre and post observation. While, some teachers admitted the peer-observations were infrequent, they all emphasized that the practice enhanced their professional learning. Also teachers held that working closely on instructional matters with their peers, to ensure that they are working towards achieving the same instructional objectives, promotes their learning.

**Areas of differences.** The results show that instructional supervisors and teachers have different perceptions about the importance and nature of the impact of the following school context factors and conditions on teachers' professional learning: well trained administrators and instructional supervisors; and the relevance

and differentiation of professional learning experiences to teachers' needs. A discussion of these differences in perception will help reveal the implications for private schools in Lebanon.

***Well trained administrators and instructional supervisors.*** Some instructional supervisors believed that administrators and instructional supervisors need to be well trained in their capacity to help effect teachers' professional learning. Instructional supervisors perceived this factor as an important function of being a leader/role model to teachers in that they also continue their professional learning in tandem with teachers. They reasoned that continuous training on their part is necessary in order to better assist teachers' in their professional learning. While teachers' found that instructional supervisors and administrators must have relevant experience in teaching and continue their training in education, they observed that is not sufficient and that what is needed is that all instructional supervisors and administrators are well trained on supervisory functions to be effective in impacting their professional learning. Hence, teachers observed that they are more likely to trust and learn from instructional supervisors and administrators if they are well trained.

***Relevance and differentiation of professional learning experiences to teachers' needs.*** Instructional supervisors believed that, for the most part, they are successful in selecting off-campus workshops and trainings that promote teachers professional learning. Instructional supervisors perceived that they are able to select relevant professional learning experiences when they directly ask teachers what they need to learn, involve teachers in the selection of workshops, and when they ask teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of these workshops on their professional learning. Although teachers realized the effectiveness of this factor in promoting their professional learning, they noted that it was not consistently and successfully



implemented to considerably promote their professional learning. They perceived that practical, relevant, and differentiated forms of professional learning activities together with the needed resources, technology and support would significantly promote their professional learning.

### **Comparative Analysis of Perceived Role and Factors and Theoretical Role and Factors**

**Areas of similarities.** This section compares the findings of the study with the role and factors in promoting teachers' professional learning as reflected in the international and theoretical and empirical literature.

*Communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers.* The literature suggests that instructional supervisors role as liaison and effective communicator promote teachers' professional learning. Leithwood (2005) indicated that five personal attributes that assist instructional supervisors in their role as liaison: skilled communicator, perceptive and flexible thinker, willing and careful listener, open-minded, and creative problem solver. The literature also emphasizes the importance of instructional supervisors' 'impeccable communications skills' as necessary in complex organizations like schools so that they may assimilate school structures related to tasks and objectives with human relation activities in order to support teachers (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Blase & Blase, 1999a; Cross & Rice, 2000; Ekvall & Arvonen, 1994; Hoy & Miskel, 2007; Smith & Andrews, 1989; Yukl, 2000). Similarly, participants reported that they believe that, as communicators, instructional supervisors ensure that teachers work towards the school vision; practice active listening skills; work with people within and without the school community to create a positive school culture and environment; and model teamwork and collaboration. (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Smith & Andrews,

1989; Elmore, 2000; Reeves, 2010). Similarly, participants indicated that they believe that a key role of instructional supervisors is to clearly communicate school objectives and goals and providing support and participate in creating high levels of teamwork and collaboration. They considered that fulfilling these tasks is key for promoting teachers' professional learning.

***Being a leader/role model for teachers.*** Participants discussed the positive effects of possessing leadership qualities and behaviors as promoting teachers' professional learning. Similarly, the literature supports this notion that as instructional supervisors work closely with teachers, they are the main source of influence and play a vital role in shaping teachers' professional learning experience and ultimately students' academic success (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1979a; Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Payne & Wolfson, 2000; Rebore, 1984). Rebore (1984) discussed six traits of effective instructional 'leaders' needed to promote teachers' professional learning, -"instructional skills, management skills, human relations abilities, political and cultural awareness, leadership, and self-understanding". Participants in the study recognized that teachers look to their instructional supervisors for guidance in instructional matters and believed that supervisors that are capable of promoting their professional learning are leaders who possess certain personality and professional traits such as being patient, dedicated, inspiring, and caring. Participants also considered teachers professional learning to be greatly affected by an instructional supervisor who is a "role model"- for example modeling effective instructional practices, professional behavior, as well as remaining abreast with current best instructional practices. According to Payne and Wolfson (2000), instructional supervisors can effectively promote teachers professional learning by being a role

model for continual learning because they are ‘teachers of teachers’. Moreover, according to a study in the Lebanese context, effective instructional supervisors were better at leading teachers by: ‘providing positive support, creating a motivating environment, maintaining high visibility, maintaining a spirit of collegiality and efficiently distributing tasks among teachers’ (Mattar, 2012, p. 523-525). Overall, the literature supports the view that instructional supervisors as leaders/role models who possess great interpersonal and technical skills to directly assist and promote teachers’ professional learning (Blase & Blase, 2006; Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2009).

***Guiding teachers through regular follow-up.*** A comparison of instructional supervisors’ and teachers’ perceptions indicated agreement in instructional supervisors’ role in supporting teachers’ instructional practices as promoting teachers’ professional learning. The participants emphasized supportive behaviors such as receiving instructional help and advice, combined with follow-up in the form of feedback, as especially promoting teachers’ learning. Similarly, the literature specifies that the main purpose of ‘instructional leadership’ is to improve teaching by supporting teachers’ professional learning abilities, knowledge and skills through the practice of supervision (Andrews, Basom, & Basom, 1991; Glickman, 1998; Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon, 2005; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1989). In fact, research in effective supervision supports the idea that instructional supervisors impact teachers’ professional learning through consistent guidance and follow-up because he/she ‘acts as an advocate, developer, and the all important link in relationship to the teachers’ efforts to improve the process of teaching and learning’ (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1989, p xviii-xix). Furthermore, researchers found effective supervisory practices such as “coaching” (Blase & Blase,

2004; Dowling & Sheppard, 1976; Glanz & Neville, 1997; Zepeda & Ponticell) and “direct assistance” (Glickman, 1998) as improving teachers’ professional learning. Furthermore, the literature indicates that teachers’ professional learning improves (Colvin, 2008) when instructional supervisors provide “frequent” (Reeves, 2006b), “valuable” (Haycock, 1998) feedback which is also linked to growth in student performance (Marzano, 2007).

*Self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology.* Instructional supervisors and teachers perceived self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology as a factor that promotes teachers’ professional learning. Participants explained that this form of professional learning is effective because teachers are intrinsically motivated to learn and seek learning opportunities and experiences to improve their instructional practice often resorting to off-campus workshops, professional books, magazines and the Internet to facilitate the learning process. The literature supports the effectiveness of this form of professional learning (Cross, 1981; Richardson, 1998; Tough, 1971). Knowles (1975) explained self-directed learning (SDL) as a “process in which individuals take initiative without the help of others” in planning, implementing and assessing their own learning experiences. According to Brookfield (1985) the main advantage of SDL is that learners (teachers) can integrate it into their daily routines as they see fit and according to their preferred learning approaches (arranging resources i.e. books, articles, content experts) and methods (Internet searches, lectures, electronic discussion groups) to facilitate SDL. This is akin to what participants have expressed that one way for teachers to promote professional learning is to engage in SDL as a way to integrate what they learn in their instructional practices. For self-directed learning to be

effective adult learners need situation, context, readiness (skills and personal qualities) and willingness (Brookfield, 1985). In this regards, participants explained that teachers believed in the importance of SDL for the following reasons: teacher need to improve instructional practices (situation); they are motivated to learn (readiness); and certain instructional resources are not available (context). However, the literature cautions that not all adult learners are ready for SDL (Brookfield, 1985) and that it should not be the main form of teachers' professional development (TPD) (Gaible & Burns, 2005:25) especially as learners might not have sufficient learning skills and qualities such as independence, confidence, intrinsic motivation and resources. Similarly, participants did explain that SDL is not the only form of professional learning they depend on, though they did not express any concerns about teachers having sufficient skills and qualities to successfully implement SDL to advance professionally.

***Professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection on practice.***

According to the participants, teachers' professional learning improved when teachers and instructional supervisors engaged in professional dialogue about instructional practices. The literature supports this practice of peers and instructional supervisors engaging in focused conversations about instructional practices as it builds collaborative and collegial relationships that greatly affect teachers' professional learning (Desimone, 2009; Glickman, 2001; Nias, 2005). Furthermore, adult learning in the workplace is viewed as highly social, holistic and potentially transformative (Cranton, 1997; Freire, 1974; Imel, Gillen, & English, 2000; Willis, Smith, & Collins, 2000). For this reason "conversational competence" of instructional supervisors and teachers is encouraged to enhance teachers' professional learning (Blase &Blase, 2004; Glickman, 2001; Hymes, 1971). This

resonates with the participants' responses and their emphasis on the importance of consulting with their peers. Participating in professional dialogue among peers and instructional supervisors fosters "coaching relationships" (Joyce & Showers, 1995) seem to be a common stance from the perspective of teachers. Researchers found that members of a professional learning community are driven and more committed to work together to achieve the school goals (Boyd & Hord, 1994; English, 2008; Hord, 1997a, 1997b; Nias, 2005; Northouse, 2010). Participants described engaging in professional dialogue formally, during meetings, and informally, during the workday and after work hours. Similarly, the literature indicates that professional dialogue contexts range from 'study teams', 'group investigation of data' and other such group meeting settings where the "community of learners" engage in professional dialogue (Dowling & Sheppard, 1976; Glanz & Neville, 1997).

Also participants emphasized that teachers' learning improved when instructional supervisors regularly guide teachers to reflect on their practice to identify professional strengths and weaknesses. The literature on reflective practice explains that the essence of reflective practice is self-awareness. Some teachers are by nature more reflective than others, instructional supervisors have a duty to encourage reflection in all teachers (Garmston & Wellman, 1999) so that teachers become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and focus on self-improvement in order to grow as professionals; and for instructional supervisors to identify areas for teachers' professional learning (Peterson, 2002; Reagan, 2000; Skrla, Erlandson, Reed & Wilson, 2001). Research on reflective practice also shows that certain instructional supervisor behavior, such as making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling, using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions, 'strongly enhance

teacher reflection and reflectively informed instructional behavior' (Blase & Blase, 2004, p. 36).

***Continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction.*** Participants perceived peer-observations to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of instruction as promoting teachers' professional learning. The literature supports this finding describing substantial professional learning being achieved within the context of non-threatening 'support systems' where peers can 'coach' (Joyce & Showers, 1995) and 'mentor' one another to address and solve problems related to instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Glickman, 2001; McQuarrie & Woods, 1991; Peterson, 2002; Skrla, Erlandson, Reed, & Wilson, 2001). It has been established that collaborative and collegial relationships greatly affect teachers' professional learning because teachers offer emotional support and group support, and discover a possible incentive to grow professionally as well as a prospect to inspire others (Nias, 2005). In fact, the literature supports supervision among teachers in a judgment-free environment to improve instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, 2010; McQuarrie & Woods, 1991). Furthermore, it is recommended that instructional supervisors facilitate collaboration among teachers, and foster coaching relationships among teachers to promote teachers professional learning (Blase & Blase, 2006). Both teachers and instructional supervisors participants viewed this as an important factor promoting their professional learning.

**Areas of differences.** A comparison of instructional supervisors' and teachers' perceptions as revealed in the findings of this study indicate that the participants have different understandings of their experiences with regards to the impact these supervisory functions have on promoting teachers' professional learning. These

differences will be compared to the same theoretical instructional supervisory functions mentioned in the literature.

***Encouraging and acknowledging teachers' professional learning gains.***

Participants' experience of the perceived role indicates that supervisors believe that they fulfill this function well enough to promote teachers professional learning, while teachers revealed inconsistencies in supervisors' abilities to fulfill this function.

Based on the review of the literature, several researchers emphasized instructional supervisors who celebrate teachers' accomplishments and achievements effectively promote teachers' professional learning (Checkly, 2000) as this function not only motivates teachers but also demonstrates validation for teachers' learning and empowers teachers to take instructional risks (Blase & Blase, 2006; Quinn, 2002; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). While the participating instructional supervisors believed in the importance of celebrating teachers' accomplishments and achievements, teachers, while agreeing on its importance, conveyed that they cannot count on it in the context of their school. They pointed that this practice was infrequent and chose not to relate it as having a significant impact on their professional learning. Other than having supportive school structures in place to consistently encourage and acknowledge teachers' professional learning gains (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Smith & Andrews, 1989), instructional supervisors must have a basic understanding of adult learning theories in order to effectively motivate and acknowledge teachers' professional learning gains appropriately (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Loucks-Horsley, Stiles & Hewson, 1996; Rowan, Correnti & Miller, 2002). In this regard, there was no indication in the results of any awareness among instructional supervisors on the criticality of this aspect of their role. In fact, instructional



supervisors perceived that they are capable of understanding teachers' professional needs, however, none of the supervisors considered the importance of catering to teachers' professional learning needs based on adult learning theories. In addition, the responses of the participating teachers indicated that in their views, instructional supervisors are not trained enough to cater to their teacher's professional learning needs as adult learners.

Furthermore, the literature emphasizes that instructional supervisors who possess drive and intensity; encourage professional growth; and set high expectations also build trusting relationships which positively affects teachers' professional learning (Blase & Blase, 1999; Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982; Cross & Rice, 2000; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hoy & Miskel, 2000; Murphy, 1990; Weber; 1997). In addition to encouraging an academic learning climate and building a supportive work environment (Murphy, 1990), instructional supervisors who effectively encourage and acknowledge teachers' professional learning gains: are 'people-centered' (Day, 2000; Rebore, 1984); have human relations abilities including communicating positive praise, feedback, enthusiasm and optimism towards all teachers (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Rebore, 1984); provide positive support and create a motivating environment (Hallinger & Murphy, 1983; Mattar, 2012). Though the results indicate that instructional supervisors perceived being encouraging, setting high expectations and building trusting relationships with their teachers as essential the professional growth of their teachers, teachers responses pointed in the opposite direction. In contrast to what the literature indicated, teachers, do not hold the belief that their instructional supervisors can be viewed as the source of encouragement on their professional growth journey. According to teachers', instructional supervisors' were

inconsistent with communicating positive praise, feedback and enthusiasm and this irregularity in supervisor behavior negatively affected teachers' professional learning experience.

*Being available to teachers and listening to their concerns.* Instructional supervisors and teachers agree that this function is an important component of trusting relationships with teachers, which also helps instructional supervisors better cater to teachers' professional learning needs. However, teachers seem to place less emphasis on the contribution of their instructional supervisors in that respect. According to their experiences, instructional supervisors are not sufficiently available to genuinely listen to teachers' concerns and attend to these concerns accordingly. Moreover, teachers expressed that even when performed, this function does not always result in better professional learning experiences due to the limited availability of instructional supervisors to teachers as well as certain instructional supervisor character traits that impede teachers' professional learning experience. On the other hand, the literature is ripe of assertions of the centrality of this function in promoting teachers growth. Close examination of the literature reveals that instructional supervisors' 'visible presence' and certain 'instructional leader's' positive behaviors and characteristics are paramount to promoting teachers' professional learning (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Daresh, 1991; Day, 2000; Cross & Rice, 2000; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 1998; Rebore, 1984; Smith & Andrews, 1989; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998).

In terms of being available to teachers, the literature focuses on the importance of instructional supervisors being accessible to teachers, the curriculum, teaching and learning in the face of challenges such as attending to a multitude of other urgent school problems (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Murphy, 1990; Smith & Andrews, 1989).

With respect to being a willing and careful listener to teachers' concerns, the literature found that effective instructional supervisors' are consistent in effecting personal attributes such as: being people-centered; open-minded; a creative problem solver; sensitive and understanding to teachers' needs as creating a trusting working environment and promoting teachers' professional learning (Blase & Blase, 2004; Cross & Rice, 2000; Daresh, 1991; Day, 2000; Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 1998; Leithwood, 2005; Rebore, 1984). Furthermore, the literature cautions instructional supervisors from ineffective supervision practices such as 'discounting teachers' needs', 'isolating teachers' and 'abandonment' of teachers as negatively impacting teachers professional learning and leading to feelings of fearfulness, anger, confusion, thoughts of quitting, loss of respect and trust, low self-esteem and low motivation (Blase & Blase, 2004). For this reason, it is important for instructional supervisors to provide 'emotional support' for 'work that teachers cannot accomplish alone' (DuFour, Eaker, 1988, p.xii). Based on the findings, teachers seem to have experienced many of these ineffective supervision practices leading them to taking a stance of not expecting their supervisors to have a positive contribution to their professional growth through that mean.

*Assessing teachers' professional learning needs and differentiating professional development accordingly.* Participants noted the importance of this function in promoting teachers' professional learning. While instructional supervisors' observed that they fulfilled this function by asking teachers about their professional learning needs, working closely with teachers and observing teachers, teachers noted that in the context of their schools, it is not a fundamental function significantly promoting their professional learning. Teachers perceived that instructional supervisors are not well informed about their professional learning

needs. Comparing these findings with the literature, the literature indicates that effective instructional supervisors are those who consistently practice instructional 'leadership' and 'supervision' to effectively assess teachers' professional learning needs (Blase & Blase, 2006; Glanz, 2006; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). In addition to working closely with teachers to understand their needs, a special sensitivity to different teacher perspectives (Daresh, 1991) will further help instructional supervisors to carefully select a set of professional learning activities that assist teachers in meeting school objectives and provide them with the opportunity for personal growth (Peterson and , 1994; McQuarrie & Woods, 1991). The results of the study strongly indicate that instructional supervisors believed that the mandatory trainings they organize are conducive to teachers' professional learning. Meanwhile, teachers believed that these trainings do not reflect their needs and hence has no impact on promoting their professional learning. Teachers responses show that they all wished for more personalized professional learning experiences that offered practical instructional practices; something that the literature indicate (Blase & Blase, 2006; Elmore, 2000; Reeves, 2010), that it results in enhanced 'teacher innovation/creativity, risk taking, instructional focus, as well as effects on motivation, efficacy and self-esteem' (Blase & Blase, 2006, p.6); this is in contrast with their realities and with the views that they were led to accept.

Furthermore, researchers in the fields of supervision and professional learning encourage instructional supervisors to: 'build a community of learners' for ongoing professional learning and teacher improvement (Brewer, 2001); and create a 'culture of instructional improvement' by assisting teachers to improve instruction through modeling effective teaching (Andrews, Basom, & Basom, 2001; Andrews & Soder, 1987; Glickman et al.,1998) and modeling reflective practice because the reflective

process allows instructional supervisors to pinpoint areas for professional learning (Blase & Blase, 2004, 2006; Reagan, 2000). There was no indication in the responses of the participants that this was part of their realities nor of what they have formed as views of the role instructional supervisors could play to promote the professional learning of their teachers.

Based on the literature it is clear that in addition to the existence of certain facilitative professional development ‘programs’ in schools, instructional supervisors have the challenging task of differentiating professional learning experiences especially because much mandatory staff development programs at schools often present poor content, are irregular in frequency, and unrelated to teachers individual and group needs (Blase & Blase, 2006; Checkly, 2000; Garmston & Wellman, 1999; Glanz, 2006; Glickman, 2002; Gross, Booker, & Goldhaber, 2009; McQuarrie & Woods, 1991; Reeves, 2010). Moreover, the literature does urge schools to adopt ‘quality professional development’ (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, Birman, 2002; Guskey, 2003; Loucks-Horsley & Matsumoto, 1999; Reeves, 2004; Supovitz & Turner, 2000) practices in line with current and best teaching practices that are deeply rooted in teachers’ work as effectively promoting teachers’ professional learning (Kelleher, 2003). The literature also highlights that the challenge remain to ensure that professional learning activities are not disconnected from teachers’ day-to-day practice and school improvement goals (Cohen & Hills, 2000; Kennedy, 1998) and planned without much consideration to the needs of adult learners (Blase & Blase, 2006; Croft, Cogshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010); it also recommends for schools and instructional supervisors to promote “workplace learning” (Senge, 2006), and to shift from passive “development” to active “learning” through practicing reflection and

inquiry along with other effective professional learning practices (Arlin, 1999; Blase & Blase, 1998; Olson, Butler, & Olson, 1991; Ramsden, 2003; Rueda, 1997).

Moreover, ongoing learning is reported as an indispensable element of continuous advancement for schools (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), the literature supports the view that all effective professional learning activities and experiences adopted and implemented by administrators and instructional supervisors must be: differentiated; centered on teachers' professional learning goals and needs; concrete and authentic; continuous over time; and characterized by continuous and available support among other things (Harris, 2007).

Based on the results of the study, instructional supervisors and teachers acknowledge the importance of this factor as enhancing teachers' professional learning. However, there were discrepancies in their willingness to adopt it as part of their views in light of the current realities of practice and the context of their schools. While instructional supervisors perceived that they differentiated teachers' professional learning experiences relevant to teachers' needs, teachers observed that it was not methodically and effectively implemented to positively impact their professional learning. Teachers also reported that instructional supervisors' practices fall short of offering professional learning activities that are related to their day-to-day practices and that significantly impact the quality of their instruction as well as students' learning.

In addition, according to teachers' opinions, differentiation of professional learning experiences is infrequent, inconsistent and as a result ineffective in promoting their professional learning. They explained that most of the professional learning experiences offered to teachers is designed for all teachers' without consideration of teachers' individual or group professional learning needs.

*Well trained administrators and instructional supervisors.* Instructional supervisors and teachers recognized that administrators and instructional supervisors need continuous training in their capacity to be capable of promoting teachers' professional learning. While instructional supervisors perceived that instructional supervisors and administrators need to have expertise in the subject matter they oversee, yet, none specified that they attended professional learning sessions designed specifically to acquire instructional supervisory skills. Teachers observed that there is a need for administrators and instructional supervisors to be especially trained on supervisory functions to effectively enhance teachers' professional learning. In fact the literature suggests that there are specific 'instructional leadership' and 'instructional supervisor' knowledge, skills and personal attributes that need to be learned for instructional supervisors to be competent in effectively helping teachers' professional learning (Blase & Blase, 1999, 1998, 2004; Day, 2000; Mattar, 2012; Payne & Wolfson, 2000; Rebore, 1984). The literature indicates that there are challenges applying 'instructional leadership' practices to promote teachers' learning due to insufficient training and preparation in instructional leadership duties and behaviors (Day, 2000; Murphy, 1990). This finding in the literature supports teachers' perspective. Therefore, training in supervisory practices and behaviors is crucial as instructional supervisors and administrators should aspire to be role models for continual learning as they are expected to 'teach' teachers (Mattar, 2012; Payne & Wolfson, 2000). Based on teachers' perceptions, instructional skills, human relation abilities and leadership qualities are not well developed in instructional supervisors to positively affect their professional learning. This left them reluctant to enlist this as a factor that has promoted their professional learning.

## **Perceived Roles in the Lebanese Context**

After a closer examination of the similarities between participants' perceptions on instructional supervisors' role on promoting teachers' professional learning, it is evident that instructional supervisors' role as communicator (liaison), leader/role model, and as a supporter of teachers' instructional practices as promoting learning. First, as a liaison, instructional supervisors' and teachers' perceptions were similar in that they agreed that the foundation of an effective professional learning experience for teachers rests on an instructional supervisor's ability to regularly communicate expectations clearly to and from administrators and teachers. Second, participants perceived an instructional supervisor's role as a leader and role as effectively promoting teachers' professional learning because teachers look up to their supervisors as specialists in their field and conveyed that certain character traits also inspired teachers to become more absorb in their professional learning pursuits. Third, participants considered teachers as learning professionally when instructional supervisors guide teachers through regular follow-up. They perceived that in this capacity the supervisor is an 'instructional resource' - source of specialized knowledge, and on this basis helps teachers learn by providing them with details and specific know-how on the application of certain instructional practices all the while regularly monitoring and supporting teachers during this learning phase. As a whole, these three functions were considered as promoting learning in the Lebanese context.

Upon exploring the effectiveness of other supervisory roles on teachers' professional learning the results revealed a stark differences between how instructional supervisors' believed they delivered these roles and in how teachers actually experienced these roles. The following functions exposed differences in perception between the participants: encouraging and acknowledging teachers'



professional learning gains; being available to teachers and listening to their concerns; and assessing teachers' professional learning needs. For the first function instructional supervisors perceived themselves as completely fulfilling this function and agreed that it promotes teachers' professional learning. Teachers believed that while they are intrinsically motivated to perform their job, receiving more frequent 'extrinsic' encouragement and acknowledgement for their learning and teaching abilities is a form of incentive that would further enhance their professional learning. With regards to the second function, instructional supervisors conveyed that they are available to teachers and listen to their concerns. They perceived this function as helping them better understand teachers' professional needs. Teachers expressed that their professional learning would benefit if their instructional supervisors were more available and genuinely listened to their concerns. Finally, instructional supervisors perceived that they assessed teachers' professional learning needs effectively. Teachers indicated that directives from administrators to instructional supervisors with regards to the selection and design of professional learning activities is a factor preventing some supervisors from fulfilling this function. The differences in perceptions between instructional supervisors and teachers indicate that there is ambiguity with regards to the extent to which instructional supervisors implemented these functions to promote teachers' professional learning in the Lebanese context.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research and Practice**

Comparisons between participants' perspectives with the international literature revealed considerable similarities. For the most part the supervisory roles and functions as well as the contextual factors that the participants noted resonate with what is reported in the literature as promoting professional learning. This suggests that participants in the Lebanese context are aware of instructional

supervisor roles that promote teachers' professional learning, such as being a liaison, a leader/role model, and a supporter of teachers' practice and learning (e.g. Blase & Blase, 1999a; Glickman, 1998; Reeves, 2010; Rebore, 1984; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1989). Participants are also cognizant of factors that enhance teachers' professional learning such as the practice of self-directed learning, professional dialogue and reflection, in addition to peer learning and evaluation of practice (e.g. Blase & Blase, 2006; Cross, 1981; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Desimone, 2009; Garmston & Wellman, 1999; Knowles, 1975). Similar to findings in the international literature, participants are also mindful of factors that hinder teachers' professional learning such as assessing teachers' professional learning needs and differentiating professional development accordingly as well as the issue of administrators and supervisors having adequate training in instructional 'supervisory' and 'leadership' practices and behaviors (e.g. Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Day, 2000; Elmore, 2000; Mattar, 2012; Murphy, 1990; Payne & Wolfson, 2000; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998).

However, there were two noted discrepancies where the study participants failed to allude to two factors frequently mentioned in the literature as essential to promoting teacher development. First factor is related to the creation of a professional learning community (PLC), and the second to the adequate training of administrators and instructional supervisors in instructional 'supervisory' and 'leadership' practices. Nowhere in the results did participants talk about features of a PLC, nor did they refer to the expertise of an instructional supervisor with respect to instructional supervisory practices and leadership behaviors. Also while the literature recommends the formation of PLC for reasons such as establishing a "community of learners" to advance: reflective practice, inquiry, action research, active learning methods based on adult learning theories, none of the participants mentioned the

PLC elements or connected their presence to promoting professional learning as is mentioned in the literature (e.g. Ball & Cohen, 1999; Bransford, Brown & Cooking, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Garet et al, 2001; Lieberman & Miler, 2001; Sowder, 2007; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Thomas, 2006).

The literature also emphasizes the importance of the specific training of administrators and instructional supervisors in ‘instructional leadership’ knowledge, skills, and personal attributes pertaining to targeted supervisors’ awareness that the practice of instructional ‘leadership’ is an ongoing process including, but not limited to: up-dating and modeling instructional skills; acquiring and practicing management skills; as well as refining and demonstrating human relations abilities (Daresh, 1991; Hoy & Miskel, 2000; Leithwood, 2005; Payne & Wolfson, 2000; Rebore, 1984). Along complimentary lines the literature also recommends instructional leaders to be trained in instructional supervisory’ practices such as: direct assistance; group development; and consistent and continuous planning and implementation of effective professional learning activities such as inquiry, action research and reflective practice (Blase & Blase, 2004; Glickman, 1998, 2001; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998). According to teachers’ perceptions, these instructional ‘leadership’ and ‘supervisory’ behaviors and practices were described as missing or very limited.

It is evident in all the themes participants discussed, that the conceptions they portrayed are mostly aligned with the international literature. However, from participant responses, especially those of teachers, there is a clear tension between what they believed should ideally be present and the actual practices that are limited by their context. Obviously, teachers are convinced that they need more direct assistance from their instructional supervisors in adopting effective professional

learning practices, such as the practice of action research, inquiry, and reflective practice as well as other features of a professional learning community. However, teachers' statements indicated that such practices and follow-up from supervisors were lacking or insufficient due to time restrictions and other factors. The absence of these practices might explain why participants emphasized in their accounts the practice of SDL as the main form of professional learning practice that teachers resort to. For example, teachers talked extensively about meeting with their peers, doing Internet research etc., to immediately address certain issues related to classroom instruction, but were reluctant to credit instructional supervisory practices to trigger their professional learning solely based. Teachers explained that as the episodic and generic 'in-service' trainings, and workshops were insufficient in providing them with practical solutions to instructional challenges unique to their context, SDL served to make up for this missing link. It is as though teachers have communicated what they actually do to promote their professional learning, i.e. adopting SDL practices as the main source of their learning because they have the most control over this aspect of their development when other supervisory practices and factors they perceived as effective and desired to further enhance their professional learning experience were missing.

This realization points to a situation where teachers have to fend for themselves in terms of promoting their own professional learning, because the reality of their 'professional learning' context does not emphasize 'instructional supervisory' practices as the main source of professional development for teachers the way the international literature does. This leads us to conclude that the instructional supervisory role in the Lebanese context is reduced as teachers are managing without the features of the role and factors that lead to effective professional learning for

teachers. This result invites yet further research in this respect- ‘understanding the actual supervisory practices in the Lebanese context’.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The size, convenience, and homogeneity of the sample selected for this study limit generalizability for this study. Some adjustments needed to be incorporated due to variances in the availability of participants, for instance the availability of enough teachers for the focus group interviews, as well as accommodating for two additional instructional supervisors, i.e. subject coordinators, at the second school plus the two heads of department. Not having enough teachers for the focus group interviews limits gaining a wide enough range of perspectives as initially intended for at the beginning of this research. Furthermore, another limitation of this study is that the information was provided by a selected group of instructional supervisors and teachers at the elementary level.

Future research could expand on these limitations and examine perspectives on instructional ‘supervisory’ and ‘leadership’ practices in relation to promoting teachers professional learning using a larger and more diverse sample. Hence, further extensive research in the Lebanese context can be achieved by conducting long-term, within participant observations with a greater sample of participants across all divisions in multiple large private schools and from different regions in Lebanon.

It would be also worthwhile to investigate the instructional supervisors ‘actual practices’ in light of teachers’ professional learning on a much larger scale in order to achieve generalizability of the results. Research could also consider and examine which instructional ‘supervisory’ and ‘leadership’ practices are applied or not applied in light of promoting teachers’ professional learning. Such additional research in the field of instructional supervision/leadership and professional learning,

will add to the understanding about the nature of implemented supervisory practices on teachers' professional learning. Research on the nature and impact of these practices is needed.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

To improve teachers' professional learning experience in the Lebanese-context, it is recommended that policy makers create pre-service training designed for the development of supervisors' and administrators' 'supervisory' and 'leadership' practices, skills and behaviors. It is hoped that such training would better equip supervisors and administrators to cater to teachers' professional learning needs. It is also recommended that schools adopt such training for their supervisor and administrators and provide them with the time to learn, practice, and successfully implement these 'supervisory' and 'leadership' practices with teachers.

It is also recommended that policy makers require instructional supervisors and administrators to attend training aimed at continued advancement of their professional in best and current instructional 'supervisory' and 'leadership' practices. It is worthwhile for schools to: adopt written policies, procedures, and criteria that details the specific training instructional supervisors and administrators need to support teachers' professional learning; monitor, up-date and incorporate supervisory practices continuously; and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional 'supervisory' and 'leadership' practices.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that professional learning can be determined from a variety of sources (i.e. school professional learning policies and programs; and instructional supervisory functions) and conditions (i.e. certain school structural conditions, as well as the availability of time), which facilitate implementation of professional learning activities. Therefore, in addition to the

recommended training of instructional supervisors and administrators in instructional 'supervisory' and 'leadership' functions, it is strongly recommended that schools adopt practical policies, procedures, and certain structural considerations, which will serve to guide how professional learning is designed and implemented.

APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISORS' INDIVIDUAL  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**I. Opening Statement**

*The purpose of our meeting is to understand your role- as an instructional supervisor/leader- in supporting teachers' professional learning.*

**II. Questions**

1. How would you describe a truly effective professional learning experience for teachers?
2. What are some activities that you perform that enhance teachers' professional learning?
3. What are the factors/conditions at your school that enhance teachers' professional learning experience?
4. If you could further enhance teachers' professional learning, what would you do?

**III. Member Checking**

*The researcher will summarize the ideas shared during the interviews. Then the instructional supervisors will be asked whether the summary is accurate. In case there are any misconceptions, instructional supervisors will be invited to make corrections.*



## APPENDIX B

### TEACHERS' INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### I. Opening Statement

*The purpose of our meeting is to develop an understanding of the nature of your professional learning experience so far. Professional learning/development as proposed by Day and Sachs (2004) is defined as:*

...all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute...to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives. (p. 34)

#### II. Questions

1. How would you describe a truly effective professional learning experience? *Describe an instance that could explicitly portray such an experience.*
2. What are some activities that your principal or instructional supervisor performs that enhance your professional learning? Describe in some details how *has your instructional supervisor helped you* engage in experiences that enhanced your professional learning?

3. What are the factors/conditions at your school that enhance your professional learning experience? (*People, release time, professional literature...*)
4. What are some factors/conditions that hinder your professional learning experience? *Think of times when you didn't receive the support you needed and how that affected your professional learning and provide specific examples of such situations*
5. If you were an instructional leader, how would you enhance teachers' professional learning? *Think of activities, plans, behaviors, and other support.*

### **III. Member Checking**

*The researcher will summarize the ideas shared during the interview. Then each teacher will be asked whether the summary is accurate. In case there are any misconceptions, teachers will be invited to make corrections.*

## APPENDIX C

### TEACHERS' FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### I. Opening Statement

*You are here today because the purpose of our meeting is to develop an understanding of the nature of your professional learning experience so far. Professional learning/development as proposed by Day and Sachs (2004) is defined as:*

...all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute...to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives. (p. 34)

#### II. Questions

1. How would you describe a truly effective professional learning experience? *Describe instances of effective professional learning experiences and explain why they were successful.*
2. Please take a look at the summary results that are presented under the following questions in your handout and share your reactions on the

answer provided under each question: Do you agree with them, anything you can add? Anything you will change?

- a. How would you describe a truly effective professional learning experience? *Describe an instance that could explicitly portray such an experience.*
- b. What are some activities that your principal or instructional supervisor performs that enhance your professional learning? Describe in some details how *has your instructional supervisor helped you* engage in experiences that enhanced your professional learning?
- c. What are the factors/conditions at your school that enhance your professional learning experience? (*People, release time, professional literature...*)
- d. What are some factors/conditions that hinder your professional learning experience? *Think of times when you didn't receive the support you needed and how that affected your professional learning and provide specific examples of such situations*
- e. If you were an instructional leader, how would you enhance teachers' professional learning? *Think of activities, plans, behaviors, and other support.*

### **III. Member Checking**

*The researcher will summarize the ideas shared during the focus group interview.*

*Then participants will be asked whether the summary is accurate. In case there are any misconceptions, participants will be invited to make corrections.*

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW PROBES

*Some of the following probes will be used during the individual and focus group interviews to allow participants to provide details, elaborate, and or clarify certain aspects of their responses.*

#### **I. Detail Oriented Probes**

- When did that happen?
- Who else was involved?
- Where were you during that time?
- What was your involvement in the situation?
- How did that come about?
- Where did it happen?
- How did you feel about that?

#### **II. Elaboration Probes**

- Would you elaborate on that?
- Could you say some more about that?
- This information is helpful. I would appreciate if you could give me more details.
- I am beginning to understand. Some more examples could help.

#### **III. Clarification Probes**

- You said \_\_\_\_\_ is a «success»/ «failure» or other. What do you mean by that?
- What you are sharing is important. Can you please explain some more to make sure I convey exactly what you mean?

## APPENDIX E

### FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

Table  
*Instructional Supervisors' Role in Promoting  
Teachers' Professional Learning*

		Sources of data			
		Instructional supervisors' (Total of 6)		Teachers' (Total of 25)	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Being a liaison	Communicating directives and decisions from administrators to teachers	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (23)	92%
	Communicating teachers needs and experiences from teachers to instructional supervisors	✓ (5)	83%	✓ (19)	76%
Fostering trust	Encouraging and acknowledging teachers' professional learning gains	✓ (4)	67%	✓ (20)	80%
	Adjusting supervision style based on teachers' personal and professional needs	✓ (3)	50%	✓ (17)	68%
	Being a leader/role model for teachers	✓ (5)	83%	✓ (22)	88%
	Being available to teachers and listening to their concerns	✓ (5)	83%	✓ (19)	76%
Encouraging participation in decision-making	Consulting with teachers	✓ (5)	83%	✓ (18)	72%
	Sharing in decision-making	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (25)	100%
Supporting teachers' instructional practices	Helping teachers manage their time to focus on instructional work	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (20)	80%
	Guiding teachers through regular follow-up	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (24)	96%
	Providing teachers with resources and other instructional materials	✓ (5)	83%	✓ (19)	76%
Evaluating instructional practices	Monitoring and observing teachers' instructional practices	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (22)	88%
	Communicating instructional feedback to teachers	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (20)	80%
	Assessing teachers' professional learning needs	✓ (5)	83%	✓ (21)	84%

## APPENDIX F

### FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

Table  
*Factors Affecting Teachers' Professional Learning*

	Sources of data			
	Instructional supervisors' interviews (Total of 6)		Teachers' interviews (Total of 25)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<i>The Design of Professional Learning Activities</i>				
Workshops or presentations	✓ (4)	67%	✓ (24)	96%
Self-directed learning related to current research in instructional practices and advances in technology	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (25)	100%
Guided, job-embedded professional learning related to instructional challenges and advancing students' learning	✓ (5)	83%	✓ (22)	100%
Professional dialogue including verbal and written reflection on practice	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (24)	96%
Continuous peer monitoring and evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of instruction	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (25)	100%
<i>Teacher Characteristics</i>				
Level of ability, knowledge and skills	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (24)	96%
Being creative with instructional practices	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (18)	72%
Commitment to professional learning and the school	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (19)	76%
Being motivated and sustaining motivation	✓ (4)	67%	✓ (19)	76%
Being organized and completing and submitting work in a timely fashion	✓ (5)	83%	✓ (18)	72%
Possessing adequate communication skills	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (21)	84%
Being attentive and open to seeking help from peers and instructional supervisors	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (20)	80%
Being a hard worker and possessing a passion for teaching	✓ (4)	67%	✓ (19)	76%
Adjusting to change in instructional practices	✓ (5)	83%	✓ (16)	64%
<i>School Conditions and Context</i>				
Availability of up-to-date resources and technology to support teachers' practice	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (24)	96%
Well trained administrators and instructional supervisors	✓ (2)	40%	✓ (13)	52%
Sufficient resource allocation for frequent professional learning	✓ (5)	83%	✓ (24)	96%
Relevance and differentiation of professional learning experiences to teachers' needs	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (22)	88%
Availability of time	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (21)	84%
Work pressure draining teachers' ability to reflect on their learning	✓ (6)	100%	✓ (21)	84%
Level of collegial support	✓ (5)	83%	✓ (24)	96%
Availability of teacher rewards and incentives	✓ (3)	50%	✓ (15)	60%

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