

# Educational Leadership and Management

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# TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>CHAPTER 1:</b> <b>Innovative Leadership: A New Perspective on Change Management in Malaysian Educational Institutions.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2:</b> <b>Islamic Behaviors among Muslim Teachers in the Public Primary Schools in the Southern Thailand</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3:</b> <b>Instructional Leadership from the Islamic Point of View</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4:</b> <b>Functions of Principal in Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5:</b> <b>The Roles of Principal in Instructional Leadership and School Performance</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6:</b> <b>Scale Validation of Teacher Attributes in Infusing Islamic Manners (<i>adab</i>) in the Classroom</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7:</b> <b>The Relationship between Strategic Leadership and Followership Styles of Malaysian National Primary School (NPS) Heads</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>CHAPTER 8:</b> <b>The Effect of Teacher Followership Styles on Achievement of School Vision And Mission</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>CHAPTER 9:</b> <b>The Images of Change: Revisit the Concept of Change in the Context of Teacher Development in Malaysia</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>CHAPTER 10:</b> <b>The Practices of Strategic Planning For School Excellence</b>	<b>121</b>

<b>CHAPTER 11:</b> <b>Major Theories of Instructional Leadership</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>CHAPTER 12:</b> <b>Teachers' Time Management in the Classrooms</b>	<b>147</b>

# CHAPTER 4

## Functions of Principal in Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate

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### Introduction

The school learning climate refers to the norms and attitudes of the staff and students that influence learning in the school. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) asserted that promoting the school climate consists of six job functions which are protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, developing and enforcing academic standards, and providing incentives for learning.

### Protecting Instructional Time

According to Barth (2002), probably the most important and the most difficult job of an instructional leader is to change the prevailing culture of a school. A school's culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the president of the country, the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal, teachers, and parents can ever have. One cannot, of course, change a school culture alone. But one can provide forms of leadership that invite others to join as observers of the old and architects of the new. Meanwhile, the principal must ensure all the elements within school, especially something which challenges the teaching and learning process.

The role of the principal here is to ensure that instructional time is not interrupted by other school activities which are not related to the instructional process. According to Hallinger and Murphy (1985), the principal should ensure the importance of providing teachers with blocks of uninterrupted instructional time. Teachers' classroom management and instructional skills are not used optimally if instruction is frequently interrupted by announcements, tardy students, and requests from the office. The principal can control this area of activity through the development and enforcement of schoolwide policies. Principals who successfully implement policies that limit interruptions of classroom learning time can increase allocated learning time and, potentially, student achievement (Stallings, 1980 quoted in Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

According to Ginsberg and Murphy (2002), principals need to regularly visit the classroom. This is because, through these visits (i) principals become more familiar with the school's curriculum and teachers' instructional practices; (ii) principals can gauge the climate of a school: Are students engaged? Are cross-curricular concepts a part of everyday teaching? Are new teachers catching on?; (iii) principals and teachers can examine instruction, student