

School leadership and local learning contexts in South Africa

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Changing principal role in South Africa

Management and
administration



Implementing
policies and
programmes

Improving teaching
and learning

Why school leadership matters

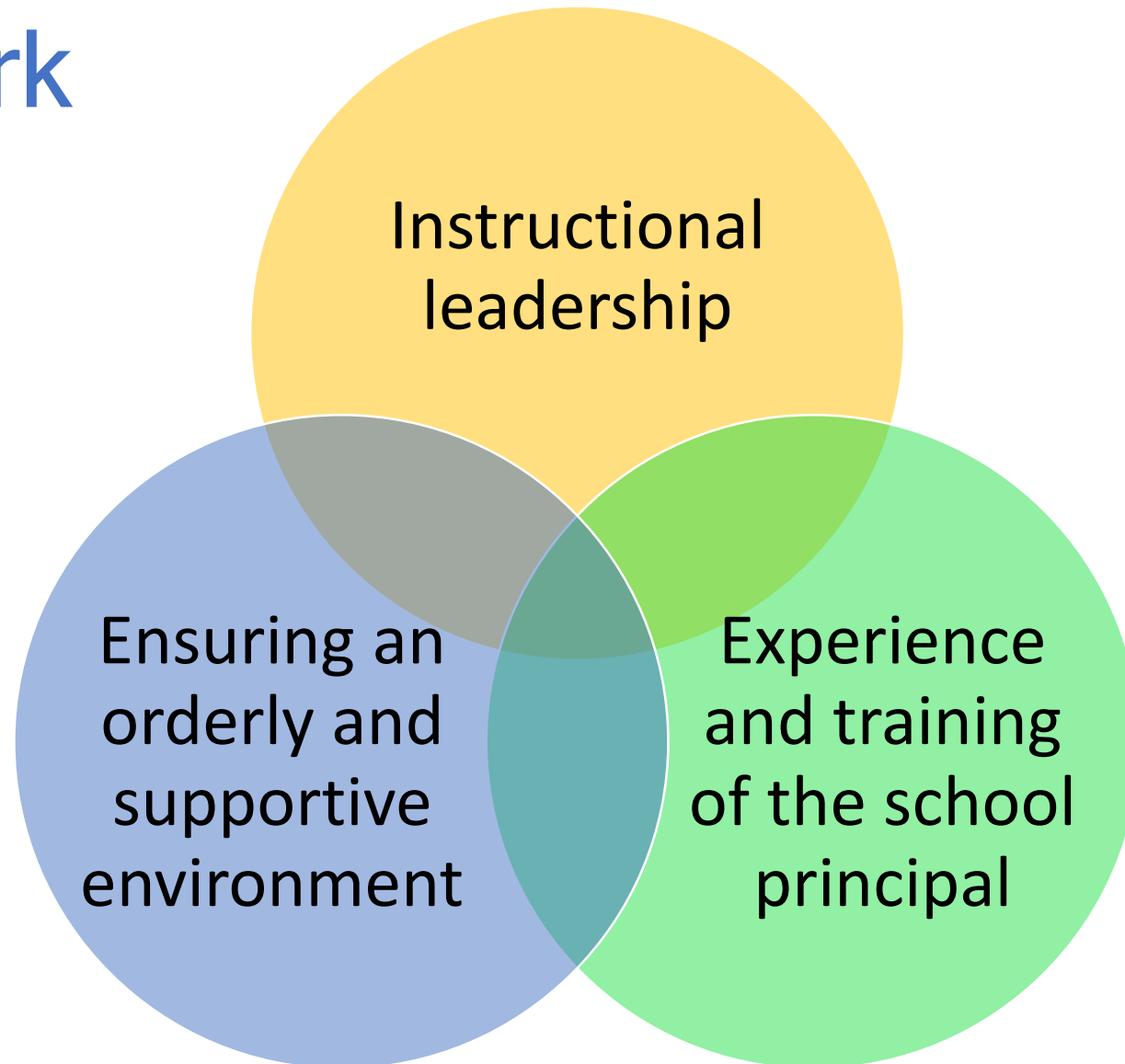
- “Key delivery agents”
- “Most important partners in education”
- Efficient use of resources
- Sustainability

School leadership and management (SLM)

- Leadership quality impacts learner outcomes
- However, schools in poor communities experience challenges which negatively impact leadership
 - Reduced attraction to good teachers and principals
 - Difficult conditions incl. disorder and lack of discipline
 - Lack of academic readiness



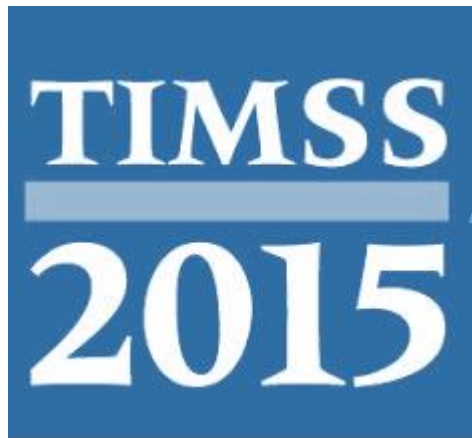
Conceptual Framework



Research questions

- Does access to **quality SLM** depend on the type of school environment that is available to learners?
- What is the relationship between better/higher quality **SLM characteristics and achievement** in different South African schooling environments?
- Are some **SLM factors** more important than others?

Method



Sample

292 schools (Quintile 1-5 & independent)
12 514 Grade 9 learners
334 mathematics teachers
292 principals

Leadership quality measures:

Instructional leadership
Promoting an orderly and supportive environment
Principal's experience and training

Descriptive analysis
(RQ1)

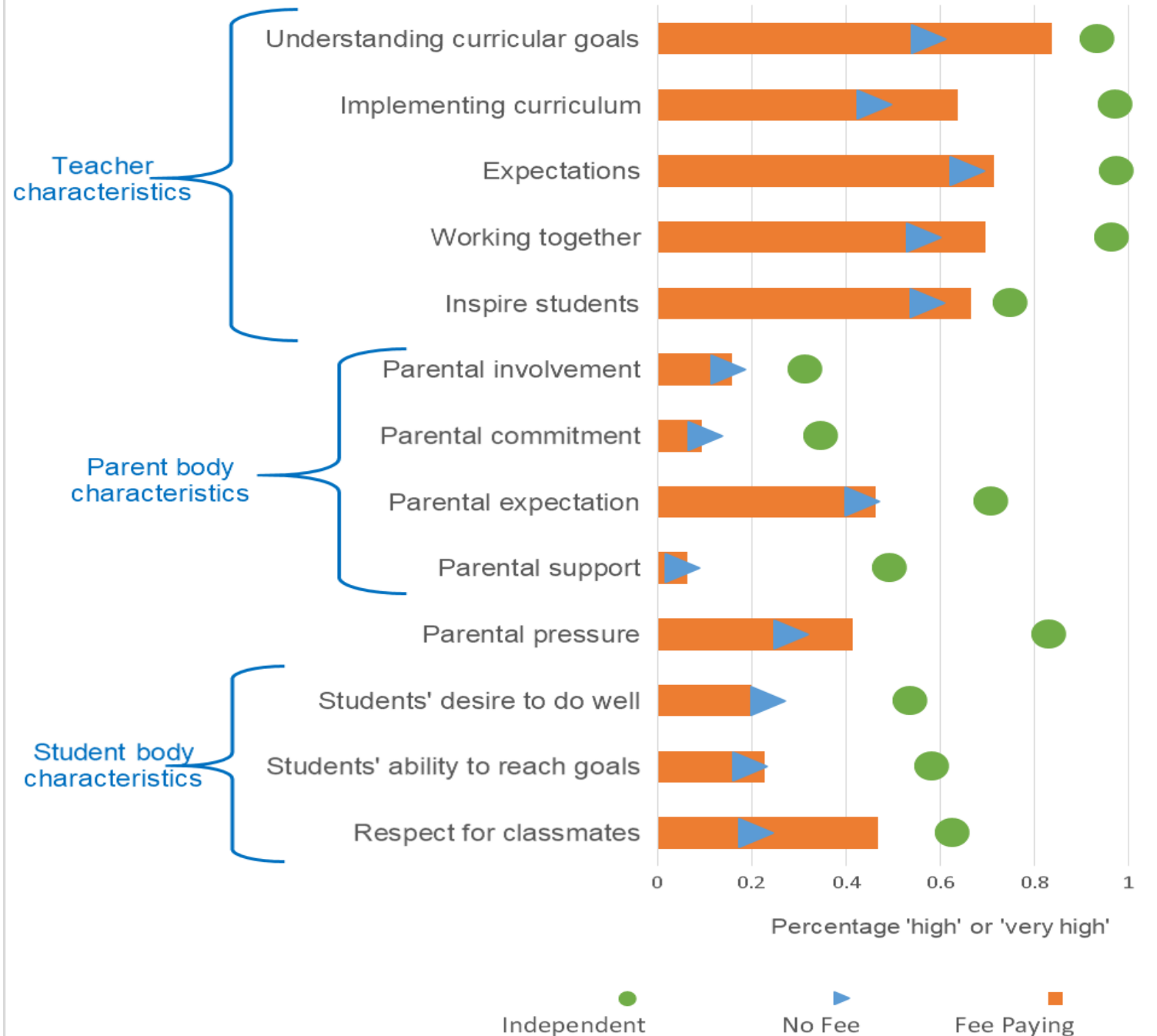
Multilevel regression analysis
(RQ2 &3)

Findings

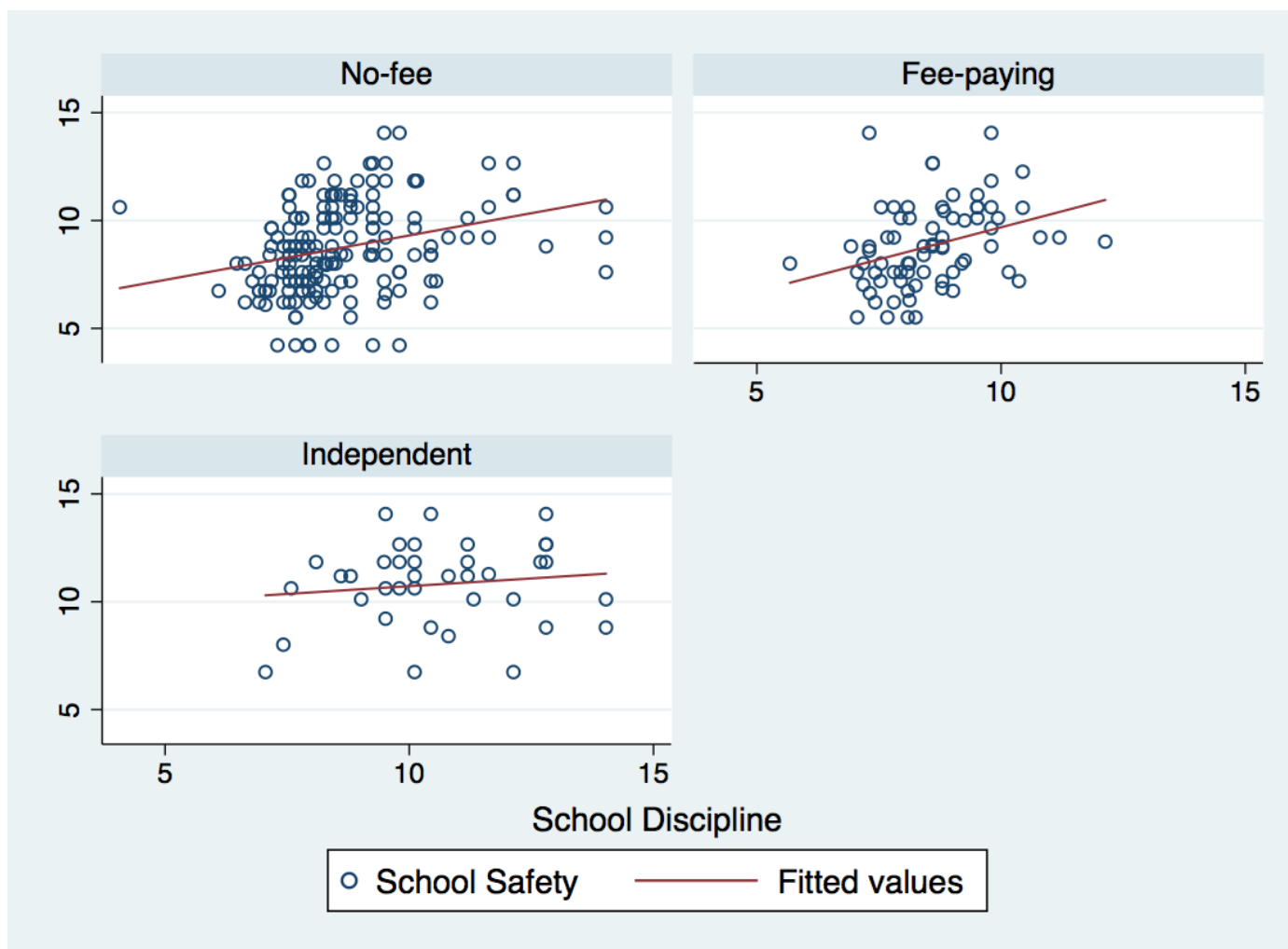
	School type					
	No-fee		Fee-paying		Independent	
Sample Size (unweighted)	7 944		3 477		1 093	
	Variable	SE	Variable	SE	Variable	SE
Learner characteristics						
Grade 9 TIMSS achievement	342.24	3.24	423.59	9.95	477.55	11.41
Socioeconomic Status*	-0.27	0.03	0.52	0.07	0.83	0.08
Gender (female)	0.50	0.01	0.33	0.06	0.55	0.03
Speak language of instruction regularly	0.19	0.01	0.51	0.04	0.57	0.04
Age (years)	15.91	0.04	15.35	0.05	15.19	0.05
Instructional leadership						
Instructional leadership index*	-0.04	0.07	-0.07	0.13	0.15	0.14
Emphasis on academic success (teacher)*	0.00	0.09	0.15	0.12	0.90	0.15
Emphasis on academic success (principal)*	-0.12	0.08	0.03	0.14	1.35	0.31
Challenges facing teachers*	-0.16	0.09	0.11	0.18	1.00	0.13
Promoting an orderly and supportive environment						
Discipline and safety*	-0.05	0.11	-0.02	0.10	1.40	0.15
Safe and orderly school (teacher)*	0.06	0.07	0.11	0.14	1.13	0.21
Experience and training						
Years teaching at school (0 to 5)	0.47	0.04	0.31	0.06	0.54	0.11
Years teaching at school (6 to 10)	0.12	0.03	0.21	0.07	0.27	0.08
Years teaching at school (more than 10)	0.31	0.04	0.42	0.08	0.12	0.06
Principals with a Master's degree	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.02	0.17	0.05
Other school characteristics						
Urban schools	0.21	0.03	0.66	0.07	0.82	0.07
Shortages of teaching material*	-0.12	0.08	0.03	0.14	1.35	0.31

*Variables are standardised to a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 for the South African sample.

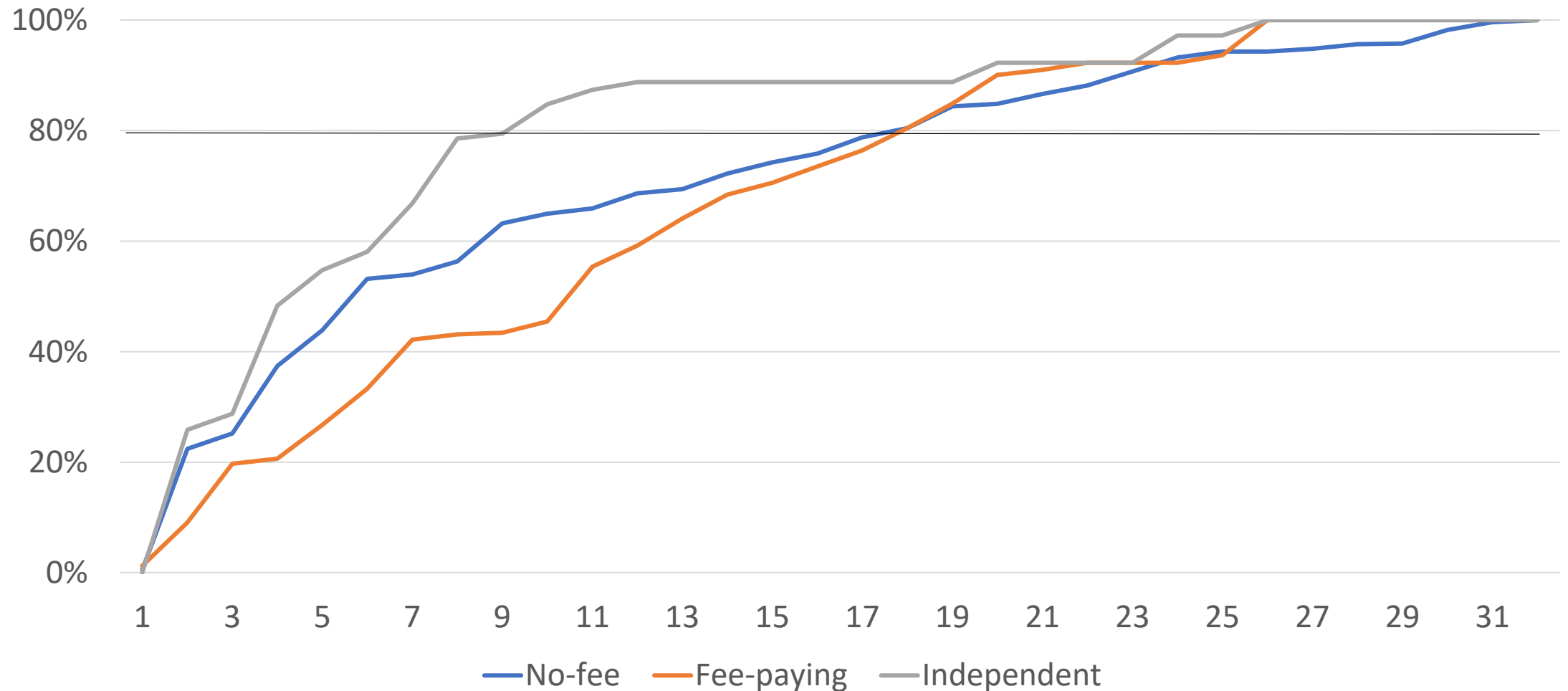
Indicators of academic success



School discipline and school safety



Principal's years of experience at the current school



Instructional leadership indicators

- Author-derived **instructional leadership** index from teacher reports of involvement in professional development activities
- TIMSS indicators:
 - Challenges facing teachers index
 - Emphasis on academic success (teacher)
 - Emphasis on academic success (principal)

Instructional leadership

~ P ≤ .10;

* P ≤ .05;

** P ≤ .01;

*** P ≤ .001

Variables	School type		
	No-fee 7,671	Fee-paying 3,455	Independent 1,091
Unweighted Sample Size			
Leadership variables			
Instructional leadership index	0.15 (2.95)	-1.39 (3.33)	-5.19 (7.65)
Emphasis on academic success (teacher)	4.52 (3.21)	15.87** (7.81)	1.36 (11.79)
Emphasis on academic success (principal)	1.66 (2.69)	4.06 (7.88)	40.12*** (9.66)

Promoting an orderly and supportive environment

- TIMSS indicators:
 - School discipline problems
 - Safety and order at the school

Promoting and orderly and supportive environment

Variables	School type		
	No-fee	Fee-paying	Independent
Unweighted Sample Size	7,671	3,455	1,091
Leadership variables			
School safety index	4.35	12.84**	-4.52
	(2.69)	(4.21)	(9.66)
School discipline index	4.48**	14.29***	11.47
	(3.05)	(4.93)	(8.77)

~ P ≤ .10; * P ≤ .05; ** P ≤ .01; *** P ≤ .001

Academic qualifications and principal's work experience

- TIMSS items:
 - Number of years that a principal had worked at the current school
 - 6-10 years
 - More than 10 years
 - Share of principal's with at least a Master's degree

Experience and training

	School type		
Variables	No-fee	Fee-paying	Independent
Unweighted Sample Size	7,671	3,455	1,091
Leadership variables			
Principal's academic training (ref less than Masters)			
Masters	5.77	-19.36**	8.75
	(9.80)	(8.58)	(15.81)
Years principal at the school (0 to 5 years ref)			
6 to 10 years	15.73~	-17.83~	56.46***
	(8.86)	(10.43)	(17.59)
More than 10 years	-3.89	9.23	108.58***
	(5.92)	(11.64)	(28.46)

Discussion

- Important SLM factors were **instructional leadership** and **promoting a safe and orderly environment**
- Access to SLM environments depend on **type of school** attended
- Access to SLM environments largely mirror access to physical and human resources
- **Instructional leadership**: Independent schools show higher teacher preparation and parental commitment

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