

# Examining Instructional Leadership Practices in Zambian Public Universities: A Case Study of Jeanes University

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**Abstract:** This study explored the instructional leadership practices in Zambian public universities in particular Jeanes University. The study sought to find out whether or not instructional leadership was being practiced in public universities and how. The study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches; the sample was drawn from Jeanes University and comprised one deputy vice chancellor, 4 deans, 3 assistant deans, 1 director and 64 academic staff at the university. Questionnaires were administered to the academic staff and face to face interviews were conducted with management. Both primary and secondary data was collected. Additionally, observations were also used to collect data. The study revealed that the majority of the lecturers and administrators did not really understand the concept of instructional leadership and that some of the academic leaders did not receive any leadership training prior or after their appointments. The study also revealed that instructional leadership was barely practiced at Jeanes University and that the administrators practiced other types of leadership and the commonly used was democratic leadership. The study recommends that the ministry of higher education should allocate adequate funds to universities for staff training. The study also recommends that CPDs in instructional leadership must be encouraged in institutions of higher learning.

**Keywords:** Instructional leadership, Leadership practices; classroom instruction, Public Universities

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century has seen numerous education reforms intended to raise student achievements. These reforms have raised great interest in the issue of school leadership. The interest stems from the fact that research asserts that school leadership can either have a positive or negative effect on the teaching and learning processes depending on how its executed. This focus has generally been directed towards primary and secondary school principals. However, the calls for quality and effective teaching and learning cannot only be limited to primary and secondary schools but also extended to tertiary institutions. Universities exist to teach and carry out research in order for students to excel in their studies. Research further shows that effective schools do not only have good managers but also those who stressed the importance of instructional leadership. Brookover & Lezotte (1982) as cited in Kabeta (2015). Instructional leadership differs from the other types of leadership in that it plays a key role in the teaching and learning processes.

Wyatt (2017) describes the work of instructional leaders as follows:

*Instructional leaders focus more on students. They look to the lecturers and the universities' impact on student learning and instructional issues. They conduct classroom observations, ensure professional development that enhances student learning, communicate high expectations and ensure that the school environment is conducive for learning.*

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The core business of educational institutions is teaching and learning. There is evidence in literature that effective teaching and learning does not only require good managers

but those who practice instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is defined as those actions that an educational leader undertakes or delegates to others to promote growth in student learning, Marishane (2011). Instructional leadership has proved to have greater impacts on student outcomes (Robinson, 2008). Instructional leadership typically "create positive environments where all students learn" (O'Donnell & White, 2005) by focusing on teachers a series of activities in leading learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999)

In Zambia and across the globe, many studies have been carried out on instructional leadership practices (Powell 2017, Kabeta 2015, Abreha 2014, Hutton 2013 and Chishimba 2017); however, these studies concentrated more on primary and secondary schools; there seem to be an indication that besides the existence of these studies very little knowledge about instructional leadership practices in institutions of higher learning is available. This study therefore intended to examine the instructional leadership practices in universities and find out how instructional leadership was practiced.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the instructional leadership practices at Jeanes University and to find out the extent to which instructional leadership was being practiced.

### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study intended to:

- 1) To establish the levels of awareness of instructional leadership at Jeanes University
- 2) Determine the extent to which instructional leadership was being practiced at Jeanes University
- 3) To determine whether the academic leaders at Jeanes University received training in education management and leadership

- 4) To establish the other leadership styles practiced at Jeannes University.

### 1.5 Significance of the study

The findings of the study may be of benefit to the Ministry of Higher Education to formulate policy guidance based on the recommendations. The findings may further boost the knowledge capacity of Universities in instructional leadership and help in the enhancement of the teaching and learning processes. The study also sets up a stage for further studies in instructional leadership in institutions of higher learning.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Leadership

Leadership is essential to an organization because it provides guidance in times of change and enhances the effectiveness of organizations. According to Yukl (2010) leadership has been incorporated into the technical vocabulary of organizational studies without being precisely defined. Bennis (1989), stated that leadership is like beauty- it is hard to define, but you know it when you see it. Kouzes (2017) defines leadership as an observable pattern of practices and behaviours and a definable set of skills and abilities.

Bashir (2017) states that the early formation of leadership concepts is found in the work of Max Weber (1947) and Great Theory as shared by Bolde et al (2003). Trait theory emerged during the 1930s and is based on the premise that leadership traits are inborn. According to Northouse (2014) leadership behaviour theory has two streams: interpersonal relationships and task oriented behaviours.

### 2.2 Instructional Leadership

Marishane (2011) defines instructional leadership as those actions that a principal takes or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning. Abreha (2014) also echoes that instructional leadership is usually aimed at the welfare of staff. The instructional leadership guides, directs and regulates the education occurrence. It organizes educational matters such as creating educational infrastructure ; planning, managing, implementing and controlling staff development program. From the above explanation, it is clear that instructional leadership is one of the many principal's management tasks. It is the process where principals identify problems with regard to staff development and staff appraisal; and to reflect on how to offer guidance and support to ensure effective learning and teaching.

Instructional leadership exemplifies this definition in practice. Instructional leadership consists of principal behaviours that set high expectations and clear goals for student and teacher performance, monitor and provide feedback regarding the core business of schools which is teaching and learning, provide professional growth for all members of staff and help create and maintain a school climate of high academic press. (Blasé & Blasé, 1999,) Furthermore, Hoy & Hoy (2003) state that:

Above all, the principal must communicate a clear vision on instructional excellence and continuous professional development consistent with the goal of improvement of teaching and learning (p.2)

The notion of instructional leadership became rich material for researchers and this sort of leadership began to expand and widen. The emergence of instructional leadership is viewed by Hoy and Miskel (2008) cited in Mafuwane (2011) as a critical breakthrough for educational in the sense that it is directly linked to the performance of learners. These authors contend that a principal who is an instructional leader defines goals, works with teachers, provides authentic professional development, provides resources for teachers and other staff and creates new learning opportunities for staff members.

The term instructional leader encompasses a school leader who must lead toward educational achievement and one who makes instructional quality the top priority of the school. Above all such a leader must communicate a clear vision on instructional excellence and continuous professional development consistent with the goal of the improvement of teaching and learning. According to Richardson et al. (1989) as cited in Kabeta et al (2015) the term instructional leadership clearly describes the primary role of the principal in the quest for excellence in education.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

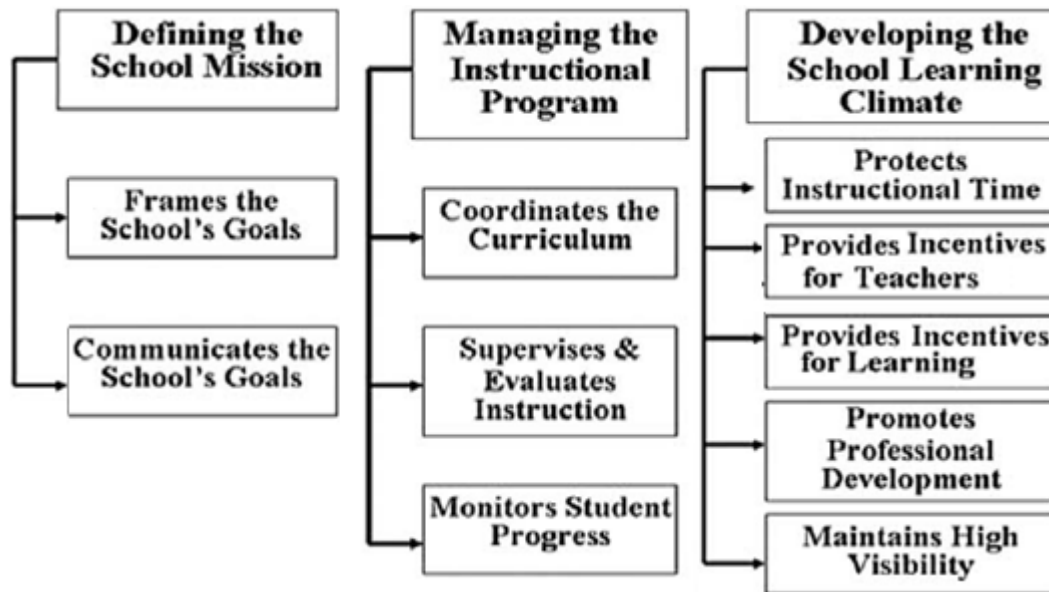
### 3.1 Leadership Theory

The study was guided by the Transformational theory of leadership. From the early 1980's the attitudes on leadership changed and the research conducted began concentrating on the 'transformational and transactional approach' rather than the 'trait theory'. According to Bass (1985) 'transformational leadership occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group'. Therefore, transformational leadership establishes 'trust, admiration, loyalty and respect in the follower for the leader. It motivates the follower to do more than expected, to rise above one's own boundaries.' Transformational leadership is thus described by factors such as; charisma, inspirational and intellectual stimulation. The antithesis to this is that, transactional leadership is built on factors such as; contingent reward and management by exception. The researcher decided to have the study guided by transformational theory because, transformational leaders according to Tims et al. (2011), create a culture of active thinking through intellectual stimulation, and this culture encourages followers to become more involved in the organization.

### 3.2 Conceptual Framework

The most frequently used conceptualization of instructional leadership was developed by Hallinger (2000). This model proposes three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct as: defining the school's mission, managing the

instructional program, and promoting a positive school-learning climate.



**Figure 1:** Instructional Leadership Conceptual Framework-( Hallinger, 2000)

### 3.3 Training in Instructional Leadership

The Zambian education system recognizes that effectiveness in the delivery of education depends heavily on the quality of educational administration. The system also states the need for educational leaders to undergo training in education management and supervision. One of the major goals of the Ministry of Education in Zambia is to train and re-train educational leaders in management and leadership courses in order to improve their management capacity and increase their efficiency.

In view of this assertion, Chishimba (2017) conducted a study which sought to investigate the impact of education leadership and management (ELM) training programme on school head teachers in selected primary schools in Kasama district in the Northern Province of Zambia. The study found out that ELM has helped improve the head teachers leadership and management of the schools. The study recommended that there was need to make training in education management and leadership a pre-requisite for one to be promoted to the position of head teacher and that courses in ELM should be made compulsory in teacher training institutions and that educational leaders without training in ELM should be re-trained through in-service.

Kabeta (2015) also conducted a study on Instructional Leadership and its Effect on the Teaching and Learning Process in selected Basic Schools in the Central Province of Zambia. The findings of the study were that instructional leadership affected teaching and learning positively and that the head teachers who participated in this study did not receive any training that prepared them for their role as head teachers. The study further revealed that despite the instructional leadership role of the head teacher being emphasized in the educational policy, the head teachers and teachers that participated in the study were not familiar with it.

The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should review the National Policy on Education of 1996 in order to see whether the policy objectives were being realized. Further that the ministry of education pre-service teacher training programmes should incorporate training in education administration and leadership and that in-service training programmes should be strengthened and expanded.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design

The study used a mixed method approach which is both qualitative and quantitative. The study converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem.

### 4.2 Target Population, Sample and Study Sites

The target population of this study was all academic staff at Jeanes University, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Deans, Assistant Deans. The sample was 73.

### 4.3 Sampling Procedure

Convenience sampling was used to pick the academic staff and purposive sampling was used for the deputy vice chancellor, deans and assistant deans. The researcher administered semi-structured questionnaires to academic staff and conducted interviews with the principal officers.

### 4.4 Research Tools and Data Collection Procedures

The researcher administered semi-structured questionnaires to academic staff and conducted interviews with the principal officers. Quantitative data was encoded and analysed using SPSS while qualitative data was using the thematic approach by identifying the major themes and finding the associations between them.

#### 4.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately and then the findings mixed together. Quantitative data was encoded and analysed using SPSS while qualitative data was using the thematic approach by identifying the major themes and finding the associations between them.

### 5. Presentations of Findings

#### 5.1 Quantitative Data

The study findings were presented on a six- point measure of the performance of the university in terms of instructional leadership by looking at whether management supervises and evaluates teaching and learning; carries out CPD programs for staff and effectively coordinates the curriculum. The measures looked at whether staff received training to meet the goals of the university; whether staff were involved in planning and setting university academic goals and whether management monitors student progress and discusses student progress with staff.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Management supervises & evaluates teaching & learning	60	1.00	5.00	1.2000	.68396
Management encourages & facilitates CPD programs for staff	60	1.00	5.00	1.9833	.89237
Management coordinates curriculum & participates actively in curriculum review	60	1.00	5.00	1.1833	.70089
Staff receive training to effectively implement university goals	60	1.00	5.00	2.3000	.80885
Staff are involved in planning and setting university academic goals	60	1.00	5.00	3.1000	.93337
Management monitors student progress and discusses student progress with staff	60	2.00	5.00	3.4833	1.04948
Valid N (listwise)	60				

The findings indicate that the university management were not doing well in a number of areas such as supervising and evaluating the teaching and learning in the university (Mean 1.2000); encouraging and facilitating CPD programmes (Mean 1.9833); coordinating curriculum (Mean 1.1833); and providing staff training (Mean 2.3000). The ratings for the staff involvement in planning and monitoring of student progress were at 3.1000 and 3.4833 respectively, indicating a high score in these areas.

#### 5.2 Presentation of Findings according to Research Questions

##### Research Question 1: Are the Academic Staff at Jeanes University aware of the Instructional Leadership Practices?

**Table 2: Participants' Awareness of Instructional Leadership**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	39	65.0
	No	21	35.0
	Total	60	100.0

Table 4.6 above shows the findings on the participants' awareness of instructional leadership where 65% of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the term instructional leadership and 35% said that they were not.

In obtaining qualitative data, the main interview question was on awareness/understanding of instructional leadership. Five out of the nine principal officers interviewed gave varied answers such as:

*"Instructional leadership is a type of leadership that helps bring others to leadership positions"*

*"Setting clear goals and giving clear directives, to lead by way of giving directives and guiding others"*

*"Selling the vision of the school to all lecturers in the school as success of the university depended on everyone."*

*"Setting clear goals, managing the curriculum, monitoring teaching and learning, allocating resources and evaluation of academic staff"*

It was however clear from the responses that the principal officers were not very familiar with instructional leadership.

##### Research Question 2: Did the managers at Jeanes University receive training in education management and leadership that prepared them for the positions they were holding?

Five out of the nine principal officers stated that they had received training in education management prior to their appointments. They gave responses as these in support of their statements:

*"Training especially in management is very important as it gives a sense of confidence to the one leading. Such training also helps in identifying the best style of leadership."*

*Some years back lecturers were trained in management and leadership and these were sponsored by NUFFIC to go and train in Netherlands. They have since appreciated the training and encourage others especially those in leadership positions to get leadership training."*

##### Research Question 3- To what extent is instructional leadership practiced at Jeanes University?

55% of the respondents stated that it was barely practiced while 18.3 indicated that it was fully practiced. A combined total of about 25% indicated that it was either not applicable and 1.7% that it was not practiced at all as shown in the table below:

Table 3

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Fully	11	18.3
	Barely	33	55.0
	Not at all	1	1.7
	Not applicable	15	25.0
	Total	60	100.0

The qualitative data revealed that three of the leaders interviewed agreed with the fifty-five (55) lecturers that this type of leadership was barely practiced at the university, while six (6) leaders agreed with the 18.3 % who stated that it was being fully practiced. Some of the instructional leadership practices being practiced included setting up clear goals, staff appraisals and provision of teaching and learning materials. In general, the study revealed that instructional leadership was barely practiced at the university.

#### Research Question 4: What other leadership practices are being implemented at Jeannes University?

Quantitative data from the questionnaire revealed that 35% of the respondents were of the view that management exercised democratic style of leadership, 18% indicated that delegation type of leadership was being practiced while 12% were of the view that transformational and top down leadership style were being practiced. 23% were not sure of which leadership style their leaders were practicing.

Qualitative data revealed that five leaders agreed with 35% of the respondents who were of the view that democratic leadership was being practiced. Two of the leaders agreed with 12% of the lecturers who felt that transformational leadership and top down were being practiced while two of the leaders stated that top down and instructional leadership were being practiced.

#### 5.3 Data obtained from Observations

Data collected through observations revealed that there was inadequate infrastructure in the university compared to the student population. The researcher also observed that most lecturers were rarely in their offices and they were only available during lecture times. The Deans were involved in teaching both undergraduate and postgraduate which is a good indicator of effective instructional leadership. The study further revealed that some of the factors that hindered effective instructional leadership were lack of skill and training, inadequate extended learning opportunities, lack of policies that promote progress, poor communication channels and lack of motivation.

## 6. Discussion

#### Objective One- To establish the level of awareness of instructional leadership practices at Jeannes University

The research findings revealed that the majority of the academic staff said that they were aware and understood what the term instructional leadership meant. However, the data obtained from the interviews that the academic staff had difficulties in explaining what instructional leadership is. This is in line with Kabeta (2015) who also revealed in her

study that head teachers who participated in the study had difficulties in expressing their understanding of the term instructional leadership despite the emphasis in the National Policy on Education.

#### Objective Two- To determine whether the managers received training in education management and leadership

The study revealed that five out of the 9 academic leaders who were interviewed had received training in leadership prior to their appointments. Education administration is a specialized job that requires specialized training. Lashway (2002) states that although instructional leadership is acknowledged to be a critical skill in educational administration, few principals and superintendents have had in-depth training for that role. The study findings further revealed that even though Continuous Professional Development (CPD) was cardinal to sustaining positive learning and continuous improvement of academic staff and students; not so much was being done for the academic staff in the university. The need for CPD cannot be downplayed, survey results by Amukusana (2011) and Abdullah (2017) show that CPDs have an effect on the quality of education.

#### Objective Three- To assess the extent to which instructional leadership is being practiced at Jeannes University

As already stated earlier, instructional leadership is cardinal to effective teaching and learning. It is evident from the evidence gathered in this study that instructional leadership is barely practiced at Jeannes University. The quantitative data revealed that 55% of the academic staff believed that instructional leadership was practiced at a minimal level. 18.3% indicated it was fully practiced while 1.7% indicated it was not at all being practiced and 25% stated that it was not applicable. The qualitative data on the other hand revealed that three out of the nine academic leaders representing the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Deans of the schools agreed with the 55 lecturers that instructional leadership was barely practiced at the university, while six of them agreed with the 18.3% of lecturers who stated that it was fully practiced. It seems that the managers rated themselves higher than what their faculty staff rated them.

The study further revealed that the goals, mission, vision and objectives of the university were clearly stated. Parker and Day (2007) cited in Abreha (2014) view instructional leaders as facilitators of collaboration who identify, define and communicate a clear mission, goals and objectives. Such leaders set, together with the members of staff, a mission statement, goals and objectives to realize effective teaching and learning as one of their main functions.

According to the findings of the study, the DVC and Deans do not manage to observe and supervise the actual teaching and learning in the institution. The findings through the descriptive statistics show that the university management was not doing well in a number of areas such as supervising and evaluating the teaching and learning (Mean- 1.2000); encouraging and facilitating CPD programs (Mean- 1.9833); coordinating curriculum (Mean-1.1833) and providing staff

training (Mean- 2.3000). These findings are in line with what Hallinger (2013) stated; it is interesting to note that relatively few studies find a relationship between the principal's hands on supervision of classroom instruction, teacher effectiveness and student achievement. The study findings further revealed that the Deans and assistant Deans who participated in this study take part in teaching both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and most of them were even supervising postgraduate research students. This is in line with Astin & Astin (2000) who noted that faculty positions usually combine the role of a teacher, scholar, researcher and institutional citizen all of which have leadership responsibility in some form or another, either explicitly or implicitly.

#### Objective Four- To establish other leadership styles being practiced in the university

The findings of the study revealed that there were other leadership styles that were being practiced at the university. 12% of the participants in this study believed that top down leadership was being practiced, 18% indicated delegation leadership, 12% also cited transformational leadership, 23% were not sure of the leadership style. Democratic leadership emerged the highest at 35%. The findings thus revealed that mainly the academic leaders applied the democratic leadership style in the discharge of their day to day duties. Mullins (2007) states that a democratic leadership style is one in which the focus of power is more with a group as a whole and there is a greater interaction within the group; group members have a greater say in decision making. The top down approach is used by a leader who wants as much control over the decision making process as possible. David (2015) argued that centralized university governance where those at the top have broad powers to make decisions is the best to propel an institution to success but can also lead to 'disaster' if the wrong people are in charge. The ability to delegate is one of the most important leadership skills for organizational growth and for maximizing the productivity of any profession. Alfred (2015) states that only those who can effectively delegate can grow within their organizations. Transformational leadership on the other end has rapidly become a leadership style of choice. It emphasizes extrinsic motivation and the positive development of followers and it is a better fit for leading today's complex work groups and organizations where followers not only seek an inspirational leader to help guide them through an uncertain environment but where followers also want to be challenged and feel empowered if they are to be loyal and high performers. (Bass, 2006).

#### 7. Conclusion

The study concluded that from the findings, there are great similarities among the research results of this study and other studies in the area of instructional leadership that it is barely practiced in institutions of higher learning. Another conclusion is that instructional leadership is not receiving as much attention due to the scarcity of literature on instructional leadership in institutions of higher learning as compared to the literature available in primary and secondary schools.

The study further concludes from the findings that both quantitative and qualitative data show that instructional leadership is barely practiced at Jeannes University. It is also concluded that the academic managers who participated in this study from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Deans and Assistant Deans did not receive any training in educational management and leadership prior to their appointments. Their appointments it was revealed were based on their high academic qualifications and work experience. Lastly the study concluded that apart from instructional leadership which is practiced at a minimal level; the academic leaders practiced other types of leadership with democratic leadership being the most common.

#### 8. Recommendations

The study recommends that there is need for the for the ministry off Higher Education to emphasize the need and importance of instructional leadership in universities and further allocate funds for in-service training for academic staff. CPDs in instructional leadership should be part of the management and academic meetings. Further that knowledge in educational leadership and management should be part of the recruitment of academic leaders.

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