

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN SIX COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a comprehensive comparative study of instructional leadership policies and practices across six Sub-Saharan African countries: Ghana, Benin Republic, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, and Eswatini. Recognizing the pivotal role of instructional leadership in enhancing the quality of education, as emphasized by the Sustainable Development Goals, this study broadens the geographical scope beyond existing research. Drawing from a synthesis of primary, secondary, and tertiary literature, the paper explores commonalities and diversities in instructional leadership across the selected countries. Six key themes are addressed: conceptual understanding of instructional leadership, policy frameworks, roles and structures, balance between instructional and administrative activities, delegation and distributed leadership, and resource allocation for instructional leadership. The insights gleaned from this review are expected to inform practical strategies for optimizing instructional leadership at the school level, thereby contributing to improved student learning outcomes and overall school effectiveness.

KEYWORDS: Instructional Leadership, Education Policies, Leadership Practices, Sub-Saharan Africa, Comparative Study, School Effectiveness, Student Learning Outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, education is acknowledged as a veritable tool for growth and development. In view of its significant role in overall development, the fourth goal of Sustainable Development Goals emphasizes the importance of high quality in the sector (educational quality). The first two levels of formal education are very crucial because they are mostly accessed by majority of the populace and enrolments are drawn from them by higher institutions. Graduates from primary and secondary education are absorbed in the economy either through self-employment or paid jobs. Therefore, the productivity of primary and secondary school graduates absorbed in the economy and success of those transited to higher education could be a function of quality of education received while they were in school.

From the foregoing, quality of instruction or education received determines quality of graduates of any level of education. Though the quality of education is not strictly determined by a single factor, the role of school leadership appears stronger as documented by research findings. School leadership facilitates curriculum reform and the development of a positive learning environment (Hallinger 2005 & Nichols 2011). The school heads (principals and head teachers) ensure provision of enabling environment that culminates into effective learning, which is an indicator of quality education. They are expected to guide both teaching and non-teaching staff, students, support them, undertake all responsibilities, and inspire them to meet the objectives of the school. However, effective implementation of curriculum (instruction) has been identified as a global challenge. This calls for intensified leadership effort at improving teaching and learning.

Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) posited that leadership has six major categories. These are instructional leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, contingency leadership, transformational leadership and managerial leadership. In recent times, research efforts focus on instructional leadership. Globally, scholars agree that instructional leadership (IL) is one of the most useful tools needed for creating an effective teaching and learning environment (Pustejovsky, Spillane, Heaton & Lewis, 2009; Hallinger & Walker, 2014). However, there have been arguments that instructional leadership is misunderstood in most parts of the world and perceived to be outside the main job description of the principal (Hallinger & Lee, 2014). Owing to the belief of the British Council on the likely impact the instructional leadership could have on learning outcomes, CCGL aims to build the capacity of school leaders, with a specific focus on improving instructional leadership in schools.

As a follow-up on this initiative, the British Council commissioned a research and systematic literature reviews in six sub-Saharan African countries: Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The research was linked to United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 4 relating to quality education. This focus on instructional leadership is supported by compelling evidence that, where leaders focus on quality of classroom learning, student outcomes improve. This current study is a development on the initial six countries in sub-Saharan Africa- Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Bush, Fadare, Chirimambowa, Enukorah, Musa, Nur, Nyawo, & Shipota, 2022),

which replicated the study in Kenya, Uganda, Eswatini, Ghana, South Africa and Benin Republic.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Definitions of Instructional Leadership

Studies have shown that instructional leadership emerged in the 1980s from the research on effective schools (Hallinger & Hech, 2006; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 2010). In the traditional education setting, the principal is charged with provision of administrative and managerial functions. The principal is also charged with the responsibility of enforcing school discipline and creation of community relationship. Instructional leadership emerged from the United Kingdom, sequel to the need to ensure standard-based accountability in school systems (Homepashe, 2018 p.2).

Instructional Leadership is predicated on the assumption that teachers and principals need to work together as colleagues to improve teaching and learning in schools (Hoy & Hoy, 2013). Hoy and Hoy (2013) added that, though teachers deliver the instruction in the classroom; they have expertise in curriculum and teaching, and they have mastered substantive knowledge, principals are responsible for developing school climates and cultures that support excellent instructional practices. Instructional leaders lead through vision and mission. Instructional leaders must have an impact on academic performance. A well-defined school mission was discovered to have a significant impact on students' achievement (Hou, Cui & Zhang 2019). Achievement of school goals is the essence of organisational structure, where the principals provide leadership and enabling environment. This emphasizes why effective instructional dissemination is a major concern to school administrative heads. Therefore, attention is being shifted to instructional role of school heads. However, there are opposing arguments on potency of instructional leadership in determining student academic achievement.

Several studies have revealed significant relationship between instructional leadership and achievement of instructional objectives. Hompashe (2018) revealed relationship between variables such as teachers' understanding of curricular goals and teachers' degree of success in implementing the curriculum and student achievement. Similarly, a recent study by Jalapang and Raman (2020), instructional leadership together with other variables had great contribution to students' academic results. On the contrary, Ponnusamy (2012); Heaven and Bourne (2015) found no correlation between instructional leadership and academic performance. Their findings were in support of the earlier opinion of Lambert (2002, p. 37), who claimed that "*the days of the lone instructional leader are over. We no longer believe that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for the entire school without the substantial participation of other educators*". This current study was intended to advance the frontier of knowledge by ascertaining the positions of the seven selected countries in sub-Saharan Africa on possible effects of instructional leadership on the achievement of instructional objectives or student academic achievement.

Dimensions of Instructional Leadership and Instructional Leadership Skills

Scholars have different opinions on a number of dimensions of instructional leadership. In spite of this variation, there are similarities in their submissions. For instance, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe, (2008) proposed five dimensions of instructional leadership. These include the participation of principals in the learning, development and promotion of teachers; initiation of goals and expectations; planning, coordination, and evaluation of teaching and curriculum; strategic resourcing; and maintaining a well-designed and supportive environment.

On the contrary, Hallinger & Heck (1999) argued that instructional leaders influence learning and teaching in three ways: (1) directly, by personal intervention. This may be enacted through their own teaching, or through modelling good practice. (2) Reciprocally, by their work alongside other teachers. This may be enacted through classroom observation and constructive feedback. (3) Indirectly, via other staff. This may be enacted, for example, through dialogue with teachers. Notwithstanding the varying number of dimensions of instructional leadership in literature, Bush, Fadare, Chirimambowa, Eukorah, Musa, Nur, Nyawo & Shipota, (2022) explained that the international literature and research offer guidance on the dimensions of effective instructional leadership.

For school leaders to effectively facilitate quality teaching and learning, there are important skills they have to possess. These include, planning; interpersonal; instructional observation; and research and evaluation skills to enable them effectively carry out the tasks of an instructional leader. Possession of these skills is central to instructional leaders to perform optimally. Andrews and Souder (1996) described the effective instructional leader as a principal performing at high levels in four areas such as: resource provision, instructional resource, communication, and visible presence in the school or college.

School Leadership in Relation to Instructional Goals

Leadership is centred on goal achievement. For instance in Nigeria, Peretomode (2006) considered leadership as a process involving two or more people in which one attempts to influence the behaviour of the other towards accomplishment of some goals. Similarly, Chukwu (2015) reiterated this, that leadership is about building and maintaining a sense of vision (this is the target or goal towards which actions and activities are directed), culture and interpersonal relationships, as well as, involving management issues that include the coordination, support and monitoring of schools. Thus, educational leadership involves the process of directing and coordinating the activities and efforts of pupils and non-teaching staff toward the attainment of educational objectives for which schools are established (Odibia, 2007). This emphasizes the importance of leadership in realisation of instructional objectives.

In a study conducted in Nigeria by Bada, Arffin, and Nordin (2020) on principal instructional leadership practices, it was revealed that defining school mission was rated highest as the greatest instructional leadership behaviour of the principals. This finding aligns with the submissions of various authors (Danielson, 2006; Hall, Negroni, & George, 2013; Lasater, 2016) on relationship between school leadership

and achievement of instructional goals. These findings affirmed that there existed strong connection or relationship between school leadership and instructional goals.

METHODOLOGY

This is a comparative research because it aims to make comparison across six countries. It is an individualised comparison (Tilly, 1984), which basically involves describing fully the characteristics of instructional leadership at secondary schools across six countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The intention was to facilitate broadening our knowledge and give an insight into the practice of instructional leadership in the selected countries. The purpose of the study was to generate evidence on practices of instructional leadership.

The following research questions were derived from the main purpose:

- (1) Who are regarded as school leaders and what do they do, when linked to leadership structures and roles in schools, who is responsible for instructional leadership?
- (2) How do school leaders spend their time, that is, what day-by-day activities do school leaders perform (most/least frequently), how do they balance administrative and instructional tasks?
- (3) What do policies (including principals/vice principals' letters of appointment) say about instructional leadership and who is responsible for it at school level?
- (4) What other leadership roles exist in schools that could possibly increase some of the administrative responsibilities of school leaders?
- (5) What is the culture of delegation in schools?
- (6) Does the resource (including time) allocated to instructional task by school leaders indicate that instructional leadership is a priority task?

Sample

The study was limited to six African countries. These are Kenya, Uganda, Eswatini, Ghana, South-Africa and Benin Republic. These countries were chosen because a similar study had been conducted earlier in seven sub-Saharan African countries – Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Bush, Fadare, Chirimambowa, Eukorah, Musa, Nur, Nyawo, & Shipota, 2022).

Data Collection and Analysis

The mixed method literature review approach was adopted through interrogation of existing quantitative and qualitative research (secondary sources) on the selected countries. The available studies on instructional leadership in each of the six countries under consideration were reviewed and synthesized to answer six research questions raised. Data collected through in-depth literature review was analysed using thematic approach. The research questions were answered under six sub-themes as follow:

- (1) Understanding instructional leadership
- (2) Policies on instructional leadership
- (3) Roles and structures for instructional leadership
- (4) Balancing instructional and administrative activities
- (5) Delegation and distributed leadership
- (6) Resourcing instructional leadership

Tabular presentations of findings based on the six-sub themes was also employed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from reviewed literature are presented under six sub-themes in tabular form to facilitate quick understanding at a glance.

Table 1: Comparison of Evidences of Instructional Leadership across the Six African Countries

Theme	Selected Six Sub-Saharan African Countries					
	Kenya	Uganda	Eswatini	Ghana	South Africa	Republic of Benin
Understanding Instructional Leadership	There is understanding of instructional leadership because principals are viewed as instructional leaders, who influenced instructional activities of teachers (Awili and Begi, 2021).	One of the three major roles by headteachers suggests that there is an understanding of instructional leadership. The instructional role is 'monitoring teaching and curriculum coverage' (Mpaata and Mpaata, 2019: ICT Teacher's Association of Uganda, 2021)	The internal monitoring and evaluation role of head teachers (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018), indicates an understanding of instructional leadership	Evidences abound on instructional leadership. (Amakyi, 2021). Instructional supervision, evaluation of performance and provision of teacher support revealed practices of instructional leadership (Donkor and Asante, 2016)	Principals in South Africa promoted instructional leadership through positive parental involvement, provision of motivation, application and provision of learner support. They are also responsible for	The principals are held responsible for success or failure of students at the secondary schools (Hounanou, 2021)



					academic achievement and learning outcomes (Maponyen, 2020; Bush and Glover, 2016; Shava, Heystek, et al & Chasara (2021))	
Policies on Instructional Leadership	There is no conspicuous policy on instructional leadership.	There is dearth of literature regarding policies on instructional leadership	There is no policy on instructional leadership	There is no instructional leadership policy	There is no instructional leadership policy	The researchers could not find any clear policy on instructional policy
Roles and Structures for Instructional Leadership	The literature revealed principals as the top managers in secondary schools supported by stakeholders such as Deputy principals, teachers, support staff and parents (Kenya's	Absence of known instructional leadership policy. This could be the reason for a call for innovation and creativity by Uganda National Commission for UNESCO (Nakazibwe, 2022)	There is no evidence on roles and structures for instructional leadership	No policy on instructional leadership	Principals play major roles. They are being supported by their subordinates	The principals take more instructional responsibilities than vice-principals and teachers (OECD 2012, Barber & Mourshed 2007)



Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 1994)

Balancing Instructional and Administrative Activities

<p>Findings indicated that principals also engaged in planning, organizing and coordinating every day running activities of the school. Nevertheless, high performing schools were rated higher than middle and low performing schools on instructional leadership related activities (Ombonga and Ongaga, 2017)</p>	<p>The headteachers in secondary schools balance instructional leadership activities (monitor teaching and curriculum coverage) with routine school administration and community engagement (Mpaata and Mpaata. 2019)</p>	<p>The secondary school principals in Eswatini appeared to pay more attention to instructional administrative activities. Regular classroom visitation, involvement of parents, ensuring provision of feedback by teachers to students, practicing of research questions and encouragement of reading culture were prevalent</p>	<p>Though there appeared to be elements of instructional leadership in secondary schools, head teachers and principals concentrate more on managerial functions at the expense of instructional activities</p>	<p>Reports indicated that principals seem to focus more on administrative responsibilities but spend less time on provision of instructional leadership (Hoadley, Christie, Jacklin and Ward, 2009; Bush and Glover, 2016)</p>	<p>Principals do engage in teaching in weekends especially in schools where most teachers are not certified or untrained (Kelani and Khourey-Bowers, 2012). This indicates that principals share their schedules between administrative and instructional roles</p>
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Delegation and Distributed Leadership

Principals are encouraged by the Governing Board to empower members of staff in making some key decisions. teachers enjoyed enabling environment by delegation of duties, internal appointment, release to attend seminars and encouraged to advise principals (Chemutai, 2015; Nadwan, 2011)

Teachers enjoyed delegation of duties from their principals. They are assigned responsibilities based on their skills, knowledge and expertise. This encouraged them to do more and have sense of belonging (Ssegawa and Matovu, 2020; Ahumuza and Moses, 2022)

Students and members of staff are encouraged to contribute to teamwork and be committed to their responsibilities (Babalola, Babalola and Nsibande, 2019).

Report showed limited delegation of duties by secondary school principals (Abonyi & Sofo, 2019)

Principals embraced delegation of duties and distributed leadership. (Dimba, 2001)

The Vice Principal are assigned supervisory role by the School Administrators because

Assistant teachers may invite pedagogical adviser to come over to check the teachers' performance for professional deficiency reasons (Hounanou, (2021).

Resourcing Instructional Leadership	Principals committed time to teacher development, student discipline and attendance issues (Ombonga and Ongaga, 2017).	Low resource inputs in terms of inadequate material resources observed to implement newly introduced curriculum effectively.	More time was committed to supervision of students and teachers by principal. Mobilisation of parental involvement yielded high performance	Inadequate instructional resources and discrepancy in the provision of resources in urban and rural areas in favour of the	Inadequate provision of instructional resources by the government (Thaba-Nkadimenly, 2020)	There appears to be rigidity in time allocated to instruction. Raining season do affect attendance in school,
	However, they failed to guide teachers in aligning vision and motto with learning – process (Stanley, Ronoh, and Maithya, 2016). The two available studies appear contradictory on resourcing instructional leadership	Insufficient time was committed to instruction in Yumbe District (though a small district, which could not perfectly represent what is obtainable in the entire country) due to practice of part-time by many teachers (Muhangi, 2019; Oryema and Picho, 2015)	(Bhebhe and Nyathi, 2019). However, mismanagement of little financial resources available was noticed (Marope, 2010)	former (Asano, Amponsah, Obed, Quarcoo & Azunah, 2021). This resulted in differences in their performance		

Table 1 compares policies and practices of instructional leadership across the six Sub-Saharan African countries studied. Kenyan secondary education curriculum comprised Junior Secondary (three years) and Senior Secondary (three years) as contained in the New Educational Policy. The administrative heads who are also referred to as instructional leaders are principals (Awili & Begi, 2021). Ugandan secondary education was divided into 4 years lower secondary and 2 years upper secondary. However, there

appeared to be lack of awareness of instructional leadership in Uganda. Principals were saddled with three leadership roles: routine administration and management of schools, monitoring teaching and curriculum coverage and community engagement. Eswatini secondary is a five- year programme divided into three years junior secondary and two years senior secondary. Head teachers are responsible for internal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. They are also responsible for proper records assessment and ensure that tests meet the expectations of the programme of each subject for both the junior and the senior level. The Heads of departments are involved in this role (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). Evidences abound on instructional leadership (Amakyi, 2021). Instructional supervision, evaluation of performance and provision of teacher support revealed practices of instructional leadership (Donkor & Asante, 2016). Principals in South Africa promoted instructional leadership through positive parental involvement, provision of motivation, application and; provision of learner support. They are also responsible for academic achievement and learning outcomes (Maponyen, 2020; Bush & Glover, 2016).

Similarly, principals are responsible for instructional role than other in-school-stakeholders in Benin Republic because they are fired or relieved based on performance of students in external examination. None of the six countries has clear policies on instructional leadership. Nevertheless, it appears elements of instructional leadership exist in Kenya and Eswatini than Ghana, South Africa, Benin Republic and Uganda. In Kenya, principals are appointed by Teachers Service Commission to run the day-to-day administrative activities of schools. The head teachers have authority to implement all decisions in conjunction with the Board of Management and Parent –Teacher- Association. Similarly, Eswatini head teachers are involved in the day–to-day activities in the schools.

On the roles and structure for instructional leadership, in Kenya, head teachers (principals) are the top managers. They are supported by stakeholders, which may include vice principals, Heads of Departments and teachers. In Uganda, head teachers appeared to be solely responsible for administrative activities such as routine administration and management of schools in addition to monitoring of teaching and ensuring curriculum coverage (Mpaata & Mpaata, 2019). Head teachers are responsible for instructional role in Eswatini (Bhebhe & Nyathi, 2019; Babalola, Babalola & Nsibande, 2019) and Benin Republic (Kelani & Khourey-Bowers, 2012).

Balancing instructional and administrative activities, the head teachers in Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa concentrated more on other administrative activities than instructional activities (Ombonga and Ongaga 2017; Hoadley, Christie, Jacklin & Ward, 2009; Bush & Glover, 2016). In Uganda, head teachers have other administrative activities such as community engagements. However, in Eswatini, instructional leaders (head teachers) give attention to instructional activities mostly. Principals in the Benin Republic engage in instructional roles and administrative to the extent of going to schools in weekends to support school with high number of non-professional.

Delegation and distributed leadership is encouraged in Kenyan, Ugandan, Eswatini, Ghanaian, South African and Benin Republic secondary schools because head teachers as managers empowered their assistants to act and play certain roles which are mostly management roles (Dimba, 2001; Chemutai, 2015; Babalola, Babalola & Nsibande, 2019; Abonyi & Sofu, 2019; Ssegawa & Matovu, 2020; Hounanou, 2021). On resourcing instructional leadership, head teachers in Kenya spend more time on instructional-related activities – teacher development, student discipline and attendance issues (Ombonga and Ongaga, 2017). Eswatini principals devoted time to constant supervision of learners and teachers. Other resources were not adequate to facilitate instructional quality (Bhebhe & Nyathi, 2019). The Benin Republic principals often create time to attend to instructional activities during weekends to enhance teachers' professionalism. However, there was differential resource allocation set aside for instruction in urban and rural secondary schools in Ghana (Asano, Amponsah, Obed, Quarcoo & Azunah, 2021). Similarly, little time was devoted to instructional activities in Uganda (Oryema and Picho, 2015).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings imply that absence of clear policies on instructional leadership, which is germane to the attainment of quality secondary education could limit students' achievement at this level of education. Based on the findings, it is recommended that these six countries should formulate policies on instructional leadership at the first and second levels of education. Further, the concerned ministry/directorate in each of the countries sampled should be saddled with quality assurance duty to monitor extent of compliance with the policies. Moreover, teacher training institutes should be mandated to incorporate instructional content on instructional leadership in their curriculum. Regular training of principals/head teachers and other stakeholders in the school setting on instructional leadership practices should be organised.

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