

**SECONDARY SCHOOL HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS INSTRUCTIONAL  
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES; PERCEIVED CONTRIBUTION TO STUDENTS'  
PERFORMANCE**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION (POLICY, PLANNING AND  
LEADERSHIP)**

**ELLEN NDEULE MAZALALE**

**UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI**

**AUGUST, 2022**



**SECONDARY SCHOOL HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS INSTRUCTIONAL  
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES; PERCEIVED CONTRIBURION TO STUDENTS'  
PERFORMANCE**

**M.Ed. (POLICY, PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP)**

**By**

**ELLEN NDEULE MAZALALE**

**Bachelor of Education (Science) - University of Malawi**

Submitted to the Department of Education Foundations, School of Education, in  
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Policy,  
Planning and Leadership)

**University of Malawi**

**August, 2022**

## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used, acknowledgements have been made.

---

**Full Legal name**

---

**Signature**

---

**Date**

### **CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with my approval.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name: E. Kamchedzera, PhD (Senior Lecturer).

**Supervisor**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to God Almighty who made this project possible. His hand has brought me this far.

To my husband, my Schatz and my guarantor, Jacob Mazalale. Your support in this project is unmatched. You made it happen. Behind this success, there is you. This is our success.

To my daughter, Chimwemwe Mazalale, my sons; Chikumbutso Mazalale and Chifuniro Mazalale. There were days I left you home to work on this project. You still smiled and welcomed me with cuddles when I got back home.

To My mum and Dad, you took care of little Chimwemwe when I was busy with coursework. Your prayers made me fight on till the end. God bless you with more happy and blessed years.

To my twin, Joel Ndeule, my unofficial editor. God bless you for the time you invested in this project.

To all the Ndeules and Mazalales; you contributed to this success. Thank you so much for the unending prayers and support.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. E. Kamchedzera for the unending guidance and priceless support during my study. You believed in me and helped me realise that there was potential in me.

Special recognition and thanks go to my reviewer, Dr. A. Chauma for the excellent editorial work you did. Your comments and corrections were invaluable. I will forever be grateful to you.

I am forever indebted to my family for the support and encouragement they gave me throughout this work.

Many thanks to all the head teachers and heads of department of secondary schools in which the study was conducted.

I am very thankful to Mr Peter Mwala for the assistance he rendered to me during the course work. Your hard work and immense dedication to work contributed to my success.

I am also grateful to my friends; Taonga Mkandawire, Fredrick and Mercy Chigwa, Fagness Susuwele, and all my PPL classmates of 2014 cohort. Your support will forever be appreciated.

## **ABSTRACT**

Leadership has become a pivot in education policy discourse. Instructional leadership has been recognised as one of the important leadership models in the school. Heads of Department are instructional leaders within their departments. However, not much is known about what they understand and do as instructional leaders in the schools and what they perceive as the effect of the same on student performance. The purpose of this study was to investigate secondary school Heads of Department (HoDs) instructional leadership practices and what they perceive as the contribution of their instructional leadership (IL) practices on student performance. Based on interpretive research paradigm, the study adopted a case study design and qualitative methodology to investigate the issue. The sample for the study was selected purposively. Data was generated through in-depth open-ended interviews and document analysis. Analysis of the data was done thematically. The study findings revealed that HoDs are unfamiliar with instructional leadership and do not understand more about the concept of instructional leadership. Notwithstanding this, the HoDs practiced instructional leadership to some extent. While the findings revealed that HoDs perceive their instructional leadership as influencing student performance, most instructional leadership functions particularly pertaining to management of instructional program are done haphazardly. The implication of this is that the HoDs may not reap to the full the benefits of offering instructional leadership to the teachers in their departments.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                          |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| ABSTRACT.....                                                            | vi   |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS.....                                                   | vii  |
| LIST OF APPENDICES .....                                                 | x    |
| LIST OF FIGURES .....                                                    | xi   |
| LIST OF TABLE .....                                                      | xii  |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS .....                                 | xiii |
| CHAPTER ONE .....                                                        | 1    |
| INTRODUCTION .....                                                       | 1    |
| 1.1 Chapter overview .....                                               | 1    |
| 1.2 Background and history .....                                         | 1    |
| 1.2.1 Instructional leadership .....                                     | 1    |
| 1.2.2 Principal/Headteacher versus HoDs as instructional leaders .....   | 2    |
| 1.2.3 Instructional leadership globally .....                            | 3    |
| 1.2.4 Instructional leadership in Malawi.....                            | 3    |
| 1.2.5 Student performance .....                                          | 6    |
| 1.3 Statement of the problem .....                                       | 6    |
| 1.4 Significance of the Study .....                                      | 7    |
| 1.5 Purpose of the study .....                                           | 8    |
| 1.6 Research questions .....                                             | 8    |
| 1.2.6 Main question: .....                                               | 8    |
| 1.2.7 Specific research questions .....                                  | 9    |
| 1.7 Operational definitions of the terms used in the thesis .....        | 9    |
| 1.8 Thesis organisation .....                                            | 9    |
| 1.9 Chapter summary .....                                                | 10   |
| CHAPTER TWO .....                                                        | 11   |
| LITERATURE REVIEW .....                                                  | 11   |
| 2.1 Chapter overview .....                                               | 11   |
| 2.2 Theoretical framework.....                                           | 11   |
| 2.2.1 Hallinger instructional leadership model .....                     | 11   |
| 2.2.2 Krug’s instructional leadership – constructivist perspective ..... | 13   |
| 2.2.3 Webers Model of instructional leadership .....                     | 14   |



|                                       |                                                                                                               |    |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 2.2.4                                 | Leadership theories related to Hallinger & Murphy's', Webers' and Krugs' instructional leadership models..... | 15 |
| 2.2.5                                 | Locke and Latham's goal-setting theory.....                                                                   | 15 |
| 2.2.6                                 | Transformational leadership – a requisite of an instructional leader .....                                    | 17 |
| 2.3                                   | Concept of instructional leadership.....                                                                      | 18 |
| 2.3.1                                 | Instruction .....                                                                                             | 18 |
| 2.3.2                                 | Leadership.....                                                                                               | 18 |
| 2.4                                   | Practices/functions of instructional leadership and evidence from research                                    | 19 |
| 2.5                                   | HoDs and the conceptualisation of their instructional leadership role .....                                   | 22 |
| 2.6                                   | Management of instructional program; a central dimension of IL .....                                          | 24 |
| 2.7                                   | Instructional leadership and students' performance.....                                                       | 28 |
| 2.7.1                                 | Students' performance .....                                                                                   | 28 |
| 2.8                                   | Instructional leadership functions associated with improved students' performance .....                       | 30 |
| 2.9                                   | Conceptual framework.....                                                                                     | 32 |
| 2.10                                  | Chapter summary .....                                                                                         | 33 |
| CHAPTER THREE .....                   |                                                                                                               | 34 |
| RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ..... |                                                                                                               | 34 |
| 3.1                                   | Chapter overview .....                                                                                        | 34 |
| 3.2                                   | Research paradigm.....                                                                                        | 34 |
| 3.3                                   | Research design .....                                                                                         | 35 |
| 3.4                                   | Research approach .....                                                                                       | 35 |
| 3.5                                   | Sampling .....                                                                                                | 36 |
| 3.6                                   | Data generation procedure .....                                                                               | 36 |
| 3.6.1                                 | Documentary analysis .....                                                                                    | 36 |
| 3.6.2                                 | Interview .....                                                                                               | 37 |
| 3.7                                   | Data analysis .....                                                                                           | 38 |
| 3.7.1                                 | Documentary analysis .....                                                                                    | 40 |
| 3.8                                   | Trustworthiness of the study .....                                                                            | 41 |
| 3.8.1                                 | Triangulation.....                                                                                            | 41 |
| 3.8.2                                 | Use of verbatim quotes .....                                                                                  | 42 |
| 3.8.3                                 | Piloting.....                                                                                                 | 42 |
| 3.9                                   | Ethical issues.....                                                                                           | 42 |

|                                   |                                                                                               |    |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 3.9.1                             | Gaining access and acceptance from gatekeepers.....                                           | 42 |
| 3.9.2                             | Informed consent .....                                                                        | 43 |
| 3.9.3                             | Respect for anonymity and confidentiality .....                                               | 43 |
| 3.9.4                             | Beneficence and non-maleficence .....                                                         | 43 |
| 3.10                              | Limitations of the study .....                                                                | 44 |
| 3.11                              | Chapter summary .....                                                                         | 44 |
| CHAPTER FOUR.....                 |                                                                                               | 45 |
| DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS .....      |                                                                                               | 45 |
| 4.1                               | Chapter overview .....                                                                        | 45 |
| 4.2                               | Description of the sample .....                                                               | 45 |
| 4.3                               | Findings and discussion .....                                                                 | 46 |
| 4.3.1                             | HoDs' understanding of IL and their role as instructional leaders.....                        | 46 |
| 4.4                               | Understanding their role as instructional leaders.....                                        | 47 |
| 4.4.1                             | Specific practices of HoDs as instructional leaders.....                                      | 50 |
| 4.4.2                             | Managing instructional program.....                                                           | 54 |
| 4.4.3                             | HoDs perceived contribution of their IL practices to students' performance .....              | 69 |
| 4.5                               | Chapter summary .....                                                                         | 71 |
| CHAPTER FIVE .....                |                                                                                               | 72 |
| CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS..... |                                                                                               | 72 |
| 5.1                               | Chapter overview .....                                                                        | 72 |
| 5.2                               | Conclusions and implications .....                                                            | 72 |
| 5.2.1                             | HoDs' understanding of instructional leadership and their instructional leadership role ..... | 72 |
| 5.2.2                             | HoDs specific practices of instructional leadership.....                                      | 73 |
| 5.2.3                             | Management of instructional program.....                                                      | 73 |
| 5.2.4                             | HoDs Perceived contribution of their IL practices to student performance                      |    |
|                                   | 73                                                                                            |    |
| 5.3                               | Overall conclusion .....                                                                      | 74 |
| 5.4                               | Areas for further research .....                                                              | 74 |
| 5.5                               | Chapter summary .....                                                                         | 75 |
| REFERENCES .....                  |                                                                                               | 76 |
| APPENDICES .....                  |                                                                                               | 92 |

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

|                                                                     |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Appendix 1: Introductory letter from the School of Education .....  | 92 |
| Appendix 2: Participant information sheet .....                     | 93 |
| Appendix 3: Consent form.....                                       | 95 |
| Appendix 4: Semi-Structured KII guide for Heads of Departments..... | 96 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|                                                                                                                           |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1: A framework of instructional leadership (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985, 1986) .....                                | 12 |
| Figure 2: Conceptualisation of Instructional leadership for Heads of Departments (Mazalale, E., 2022).....                | 20 |
| Figure 3:Diagrammatic illustration of the conceptual framework.....                                                       | 32 |
| Figure 4: Instructional leadership functions that matched HoDs understanding of their instructional leadership role ..... | 50 |

## **LIST OF TABLE**

|                                                                         |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 1: Biographical data of HoDs from the two schools.....            | 46 |
| Table 2: Instructional leadership functions defined in this study ..... | 49 |

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

|        |                                                                 |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| CATS   | Continuous assessment tests                                     |
| DIAS   | Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services                 |
| EMIS   | Education Management Information System                         |
| HODs   | Heads of Department                                             |
| MANEB  | Malawi National Examinations Board                              |
| MoESC  | Ministry of Education Sports and Culture                        |
| MoEST  | Ministry of Education Science and Technology                    |
| MSCE   | Malawi School Certificate of Education                          |
| SEED   | Southeast Education Division                                    |
| SMT    | School Management Team                                          |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation |

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter introduces the background to the study on instructional leadership practices of heads of departments and what they perceive as the effect of instructional leadership practices on students' performance. It then explains the problem statement, significance of the study, the purpose, and outlines the research questions that guided the study. The operational definitions of the key terms used in the thesis are also presented. The chapter summary is provided at the end.

#### **1.2 Background and history**

Leadership is becoming a priority in education policy discourse globally. The emphasis on leadership has brought changes in how we view school leaders. School leaders are now increasingly recognised as central in promoting access to quality education for all students (UNESCO, 2015). Several factors have led to the current focus on school leadership. These include evidence from research, changing and complex expectations about the school system and the need to improve quality, as expressed in Malawi's 2015 National Education for all (EFA) assessment report (UNESCO, 2015). The report indicates that countries are now beginning to change by focusing on school governance, management, and leadership as levers for improving teaching and learning outcomes, which is regarded as a performance measure.

##### **1.2.1 Instructional leadership**

Instructional leadership is a type of leadership that supports the development of teaching and learning. Instructional leadership (IL) is an educational leadership approach that focuses on the core responsibility, namely teaching and learning, by defining the school vision, mission, and goals, managing the instructional program and promoting the school climate (Hallinger, 2005). Shoma, Daud and Subramaniam (2016) describe IL in terms of three leadership dimensions: supervision and evaluation of instruction, curriculum coordination and monitoring of student performance.

It can be realised from the above definitions that IL is a vast construct, yet the primary purpose of instructional leadership is to steer the teaching and learning process in the school that is central to the school's activities. The instructional leader aims mainly to influence student learning through the teachers.

Instructional leadership focuses on teaching and learning and on the behaviour of teachers in working with students. Leaders' influence is targeted at student learning via teachers. The emphasis is on the direction and impact of influence rather than the influence process itself. (Bush & Glover, 2003, p. 12)

IL is a vital tool in ensuring that instruction is taking place as required and that students are ultimately performing well. In this study, IL is understood as the influence, supervision, and direction that a leader in the school offers to teachers to manage teaching and learning.

### ***1.2.2 Principal/Headteacher versus HoDs as instructional leaders***

Proponents and researchers of IL have in the past advanced the view that the school principal is the primary source of educational expertise (Hallinger, 2005; Harris, Jones, Cheah, Devadason and Adams, 2017; O'Donnell & White, 2005; Wallin et al., 2019). The principal's role was to maintain high expectations for teachers and students, supervise classroom instruction, coordinate the school's curriculum, and monitor student progress (Barth, 1986). All this was aimed at standardising the practice of effective teaching.

However, subsequent studies have expanded the view of instructional leadership, demonstrating that the work of improving teaching not only rests in the hands of the principal but is distributed across a host of leaders (Spillane, 2005, 2012; Spillane Diamond and Jita, 2003, 2004; Spillane & Diamond, 2007) such as teacher leaders, departmental chairs, and instructional coaches. Valentine and Prater (2011) agree with this notion, and they asserted that IL arguably extends beyond the principal and the administrative team within the most effective schools. Instructional leadership does not only rest in the hands of the head teacher. Heads of departments (HoDs) are instructional leaders within their departments.



### **1.2.3 Instructional leadership globally**

Much research has been done in developed and developing countries regarding the IL role of school leaders (Bendikson, Robinson and Hattie, 2012; Ghavifekr, 2017; Ghavifekr, Ibrahim, Chellapan, Sukumaran and Subramaniam, 2017; Machoya, Mugwe and Masau, 2014; Manaseh, 2016). Numerous studies have focused on the principal/head teacher as the prominent instructional leader in the school. Others have argued that the principal/head teacher cannot be the sole instructional leader in the school (Leithwood, 2016).

Other scholars have indicated that the HoD is closest to teachers and better placed to offer IL to teachers in their departments (Neumerski, 2012). Other studies have pointed out the unclear role of HoDs as instructional leaders and the challenges they face in executing their role as instructional leaders (Bambi, 2012). Although there are dissenting views in the literature regarding the instructional role of the HoDs, the HoDs are instructional leaders. They qualify to offer IL to teachers within their departments by their position within the school structure. Bush (2008) asserts that HoDs are *de facto* instructional leaders in the school.

It is an accepted fact that myriad factors influence learning and student academic performance. Leadership has been recognised as one of the factors that influence student learning (Marzano, 2005; Dhuey and Smith, 2014). Even though there is no single leadership model that guarantees success (Day, Gu and Sammons, 2016), research has identified instructional leadership (IL) as the form with more influence on student achievement. Bendikson, Robinson, and Hattie (2012) assert that much emphasis is being placed on IL primarily because this type of leadership substantially impacts student outcomes more than other types of leadership. Instruction is the main business of the school. Focusing school leadership on instruction would improve the schools' effectiveness in adding more value to students' performance.

### **1.2.4 Instructional leadership in Malawi**

Instructional leadership is an area that has been researched in developed and developing countries with a focus mainly on the head of schools. It is, however, a new

term in the Malawian education system. It is observed that the term IL is almost inexistent in Malawi's education policy documents. However, some policies seem to outline statements that point to instructional leadership. For instance, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), in its Policy Investment Framework (PIF), points out that the Ministry of Education would continue to take appropriate measures aimed at strengthening the professional competence of secondary school head teachers and HoDs to carry out advisory services within the schools (MoEST, 2001). The head teachers and HoDs advisory services are mainly regarding the school's core purpose, teaching and learning, which is basically instructional leadership.

The Education Sector Implementation Plan II (ESIP) (MoEST, 2014) echoes this further where the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) provides for the Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS). The primary role of the DIAS is to provide professional support to the school personnel involved in the supervision of instruction which is a basis for quality control within the school. In other words, the DIAS is there to support the instructional leaders in the school. It further points out that the Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS) has taken a new direction by making the head teachers and other school personnel take on more responsibilities in supervision and setting up standards for the school (MoEST, 2014). In this regard, the head teachers and HoDs are expected to carry out school-based supervision of the teaching and learning process, essentially instructional leadership.

The Secondary School Handbook in Malawi governs the roles and responsibilities of head teachers, HoDs and teachers (MoEST, 2014). According to the handbook, the HoD monitors teaching and learning. As head of the curriculum, the HoD oversees and supervises the proper implementation of the curriculum by carrying out specific functions (MoEST, 2014). These roles are consistent with the IL roles stipulated in the existing literature. Though not pointed out directly, the HoDs are expected to act as instructional leaders.

Like many other countries in the sub-Saharan region, Malawi has emphasised governance and management. Governance and management have become one of the top policy agendas to meet the goal of equitable access to quality education for all. The National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP), 2020–2030 (MoEST, 2020), highlights governance and management as one of its priority areas for all education sub-sectors, including the secondary education sub-sector. Under this priority area, the plan indicates low school management and leadership capacity as a challenge affecting education delivery. The HoDs and others in the school management team (SMT) must take up the leadership roles necessary to ensure effective learning.

The secondary school handbook (MoEST, 2014). outlines the specific functions of the school management team members, including HoDs. The specific functions of the HoD include.

1. Supervising teaching and learning.
2. Advising the head teacher on matters affecting the operation of the department.
3. Checking test items, acting as head teacher in the absence of both the head teacher and deputy.
4. Allocating teaching subjects
5. Supervising the use of laboratories
6. Inducting new members of staff.
7. Planning/organising departmental meetings and in-service training activities
8. Ensuring that teaching and learning materials are available in the department
9. Preparing departmental budget estimates
10. Participating in disciplinary committee meetings
11. Participating in preparing the master timetable

It should be made clear that the role of the head of department is a delegated role. The HoD is answerable to the head of the school. He/she is required to report to the headteacher as the main instructional leader in the school. The HoDs are very close to classroom teachers and students than is the headteacher. Given the position HoDs occupy in the school structure, this study upholds the view that what the HoDs do in their departments can contribute to students' performance.

The NESIP (MoEST, 2020) indicates strengthening leadership capacities at different levels to achieve improved learning outcomes, including the school. One vehicle for achieving this would be to look at the leadership role of the HoDs who are in proximity to the teachers who deliver instruction in the classroom. It is essential to understand what the HoDs do in leading the teachers in their department to ensure the delivery of quality education and improved students' performance.

### ***1.2.5 Student performance***

Student performance in this study is conceptualised as the extent to which students achieve their short or long-term educational goals (Heaven & Bourne, 2016). The long-term goal is passing the Malawi School Certificate of Education examinations. Although the subject teachers are mainly held accountable for students' performance in their respective subjects, HoDS can also be held accountable for the overall performance of their departments. In other words, the HoDs are commended if the students perform very well in the subject areas within their departments, and the opposite is true when the students perform poorly. This is so because they are responsible for managing teaching and learning within their departments.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number four points out that by 2030, governments should ensure equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all students (UNDP, 2015). The Government of Malawi commits to this important goal through the National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP), 2020-2030, by enshrining access to quality education in the general objectives for the different education sub-sectors (MoEST, 2020).

The NESIP (Ministry of education, 2020) highlights low-quality school leadership and management as one of the priority areas to be addressed in the secondary education sub-sector. Under the general objective of increasing access to quality secondary education for all, the plan, through strategic objective three, seeks to improve governance and management of secondary education by strengthening

leadership capacities at different levels, including the school level, for improved learning outcomes (MoEST, 2020).

It is essential first to understand what the leaders at the school level do regarding their leadership roles to strengthen the leadership capacity at the school level for improved students' performance. Instructional leadership is a leadership model that focuses on the school's core purpose, teaching and learning. Literature indicates that IL has the potential to improve classroom instruction and, resultantly, student performance (Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2007). Furthermore, literature acknowledges HoDs as instructional leaders within their departments (Sengai, 2021).

The Malawi Secondary School Handbook (MoEST, 2014) outlines IL roles that HoDs are expected to carry out within their departments. Nevertheless, we do not know what the HoDs understand about instructional leadership and what they do as instructional leaders. Furthermore, we do not know the perceptions the HoDs have of their IL role and its effect on student performance, which is an indicator of quality. Given the importance of IL in promoting quality education as measured by students' performance, it is crucial to understand if IL provided by HoDs in our secondary schools has any implication on students' performance. It is against this background that the researcher investigated instructional leadership practices of HoDs and the perceived contribution to students' performance.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Literature is replete with IL studies that focus on the head of school as the primary person responsible for offering instructional leadership. This study focuses on heads of departments as instructional leaders within their departments. This study, therefore, contributes to the existing body of knowledge on IL in Malawi and globally.

Given the importance of IL in promoting quality education as measured by student performance, it is crucial to understand if IL provided by HoDs in our secondary schools has any implication on student performance. Policymakers would use the knowledge generated to formulate and implement school-based capacity-building policies and design professional development programs that would support HoDs to

perform better as instructional leaders. It also informs policymakers in developing appropriate interventions regarding IL in schools.

Through a better understanding of IL and improved practice of the same, the study has the potential to improve instructional leadership practices of HoDs in our secondary schools. This can in the end positively influence teacher performance leading to improved student performance.

Furthermore, the NESIP (2020-2030) spells out the need to strengthen leadership capacity at the school level for improved student performance. Instructional leadership has been documented as one of the leadership models that can influence student performance. HoDs are *de facto* instructional leaders in their departments. In this regard, it is crucial to explore the instructional leadership practices of HoDs in secondary schools and investigate the influence of their instructional leadership role on students' performance.

It is against this background that the study aimed to investigate instructional leadership practices of HoDs and the perceived contribution of the same to students' performance.

### **1.5 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate HoDs' instructional leadership practices and what they perceive as the effect of their instructional leadership practices on students' performance.

### **1.6 Research questions**

To achieve this purpose of the study, the following questions were asked.

#### **1.2.6 Main question:**

The main research question was, "what are HoDs instructional leadership practices and what is their perception of the contribution of their IL practices to students' performance?"

### **1.2.7 Specific research questions**

1. What is HoDs' understanding of instructional leadership?
2. What specific practices do HoDs carry as instructional leaders in their departments?
3. How do the HoDs manage instructional program?
4. What is the HoDs' perceived contribution of their IL practices to students' performance?

### **1.7 Operational definitions of the terms used in the thesis**

The following terms are defined operationally to understand the area under study.

**Leadership:** a complex, multifaceted process concerned with the art of inspiring, motivating, and guiding followers in a particular direction which involves casting a vision, goal setting, and encouraging people to be successful (Fischer, Dietz, & Antonakis, 2017).

**Instructional leadership:** In this study, instructional leadership is defined as all those practices an instructional leader performs to improve teaching and learning, including supervision of teaching and learning and monitoring student performance (Mestry & Pillay, 2013).

**Management of instructional program:** It is the coordination and control of instruction and curriculum, which involves supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum and monitoring student progress (Hallinger, 2003).

**Instructional program:** This refers to a replicable instructional activity that is designed and implemented to achieve an instructional goal and combines a curriculum component and teaching procedure (Hallinger, 2003).

**Head of Department (HoD):** This refers to a teacher who takes on additional, formal responsibility in secondary school (Clarke, 2009).

**Student performance** refers to pupils' success in meeting short-to-long term goals (Heaven & Bourne, 2016). In this study, MSCE results are considered.

### **1.8 Thesis organisation**

The thesis is organised into chapters, one up to 5. Chapter 1 has provided the background of the study through a review of related literature. The chapter has also presented the research problem. This chapter also has highlighted the study's primary and specific objective. The justification and significance of the study have also been

articulated in chapter 1. Operational definitions used in the study have also been highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature related to the problem under study. The chapter concentrates on instructional leadership and management of the instructional program. The chapter also reviews instructional leadership literature, which extends to student performance. The literature reviewed led to the developing of a conceptual framework that guided the study.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the research design and methodology of the study. First, the chapter discusses the research paradigm that guided the choice of the study's research design and methodology. In addition, the chapter discusses the research design and methodology employed to address the purpose of the study. The chapter also describes the sampling strategy, the target population for the study, the methods for data generation, and discusses how data were analysed. The study's trustworthiness, limitation, and ethical issues are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 is devoted to discussing the research findings of the study on HoDs IL practices and the perceived contribution to students' performance. The discussion of the findings is centred on four research sub-questions that guided the study.

Chapter 5 has presented the discussion of conclusions and implications. The conclusions are drawn based on the study findings. The chapter also provides implications of the study findings in line with the conclusions.

### **1.9 Chapter summary**

In this chapter, the topic under study has been introduced. This has been done by articulating the original views about instructional leadership and the current situation. Further, the issue under investigation has been contextualized in the Malawi setting by highlighting what the NESIP highlights on leadership in the school, discussing the roles of the HoDs as spelt out by the secondary school handbook and relating them with IL. The problem statement has been presented. The research questions for the study have been laid down. The significance of the study has also been explained. The next chapter reviews the literature related to the current research.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter begins by presenting the theoretical foundation for the study. This is done by presenting some models of instructional leadership and related theories. Then literature related to instructional leadership and student performance is reviewed. The review concentrates on instruction, leadership, instructional leadership practices and how it is associated with students' performance. Empirical evidence on the central issues under study is also presented. Finally, the chapter discusses the conceptual framework that guided the study and then provides the chapter summary.

#### **2.2 Theoretical framework**

A theoretical framework comprises the theories expressed by experts in the field in which one plans to research and draw upon to provide a theoretical coat hanger for data analysis and interpretation of results (Kivunja, 2018). In other words, a theoretical framework is a structure that summarises concepts and theories developed from previously tested and published knowledge. The concepts and theories help one have a theoretical background or basis for data analysis and interpretation of the meaning of the research data. (Swanson & Chermack, 2013) asserts that a theoretical framework is a structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study.

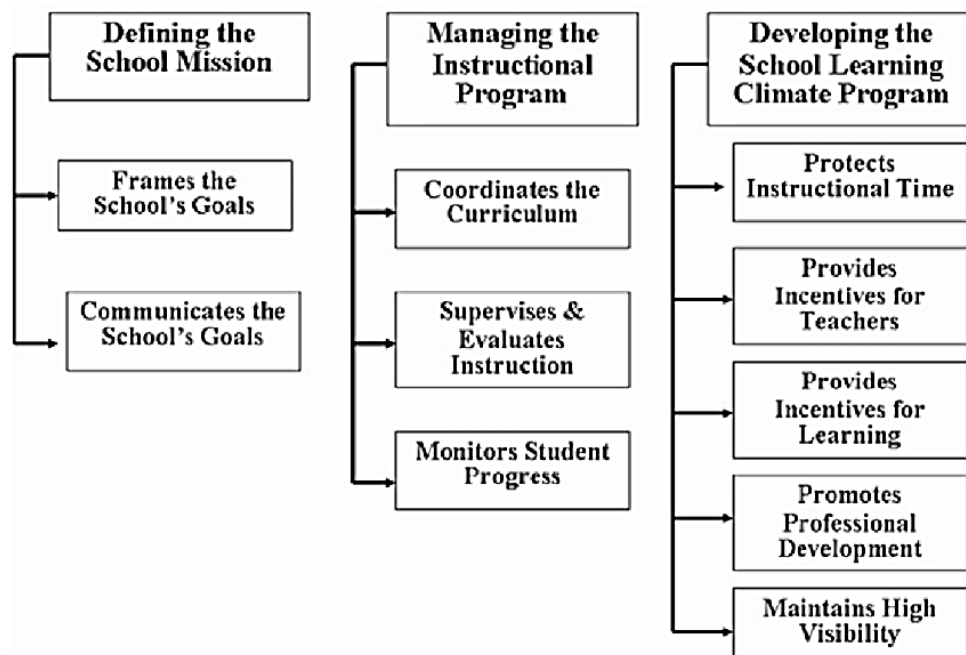
This study is situated within the instructional leadership models as proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), Krug (1992) and Weber (1989). (Hallinger, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 1998)

##### **2.2.1 *Hallinger instructional leadership model***

Hallinger's instructional leadership model is one of the most well-known theories of instructional leadership. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) developed their model by examining the instructional leadership behaviour of 10 elementary school principals and reviewing the literature on school effectiveness. According to Hallinger and Murphy (1985), instructional leadership is robust and directive leadership that focuses

directly on curriculum and instructional practices. Hallinger and Murphy advance the view that instructional leaders bring about the institution's effectiveness, especially in teaching and learning.

The model proposes three dimensions for the instructional leadership role of the principal. These are; defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger, 2008; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). These three dimensions are further delineated into ten instructional leadership functions, as shown in figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: A framework of instructional leadership (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985, 1986)**

With the evolution of transformational leadership, other scholars faulted the model proposed by Hallinger and Murphy mainly because of their emphasis on the principal as the centre of expertise. Nevertheless, the model has stood the test of time as it has been empirically tested. Although the model originated with a focus on the head of school as a centre of expertise, it was found helpful to define the instructional leadership functions that an instructional leader assumes in the school in this study.

### **2.2.2 *Krug's instructional leadership – constructivist perspective***

Krug (1992) defines instructional leadership from a constructivist perspective. Krug asserts that effective instructional leadership strategically applies knowledge to solve contextually specific problems and to achieve the purposes of schooling through others. According to Krug, the contexts in which leaders operate differ significantly, as do the opportunities they encounter for expressing leadership in the different contexts. How a leader addresses various aspects of instructional leadership is as varied as the number of leaders. Furthermore, although some schools share some environmental aspects, the socioeconomic background of staff and student body is shaped by myriad factors, including available resources. Krug (1992, p. 5) defines instructional leadership as a combination of five dimensions of the principal's role: defining mission, managing curriculum and instruction, supervising and supporting teaching, monitoring student progress, and promoting instructional climate.

According to Greb (2011), these themes can further be expounded. First, defining the mission involves framing the school's goals, purpose, and mission necessary for decision-making. Secondly, managing curriculum and instruction requires structuring programs to ensure coherence and alignment within specific curricula and across programs. Thirdly, Supervising and supporting teachers entails providing professional development that incorporates various instruction and learner needs strategies. Supporting teachers involve developing teachers' human capital. Monitoring student progress involves interpreting and assessing data to produce criteria for improving teacher instruction. Promoting an instructional climate involves the development of a conducive learning environment. Krug presented empirical evidence that a direct correlation exists between these five dimensions of instructional leadership and student achievement (Greb, 2011).

The study found Krug's constructivist model of instructional leadership very useful as it helped define the instructional leadership functions that an instructional leader can assume in different contexts. More importantly, evidence of the direct correlation between the five dimensions of instructional leadership defined by Krug and student achievement made this model indispensable in this study. This is so because this study sought to investigate the instructional leadership practices of HoDs and their

contribution to student performance. This model formed the theoretical basis for connecting the instructional leadership functions with students' performance.

### **2.2.3 *Webers Model of instructional leadership***

Weber's model of instructional leadership includes the aspect of shared leadership and empowerment of informal leaders. Weber (1989) highlights the need for an instructional leader even in the absence of the head of school, which in other models is considered the sole instructional leader. Based on this, effective instructional leadership largely depend on the flexibility of the head of the school in sharing the leadership role and the clarity of the role that is matched with individuals who can perform it collaboratively. According to Weber (1989), there are five essential domains of instructional leadership: defining the mission, managing the curriculum and instruction, promoting a positive learning environment, observing and improving instruction, and assessing the instructional programme.

According to this model, the instructional leaders are instrumental in initiating and contributing to the planning, designing, administering and analysing of the effectiveness of a curriculum. Continuous scrutiny of the instructional program, in turn, enables the teachers to meet the needs of the students through constant refinement and revision (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Weber's model generally incorporates research about shared leadership and empowerment of informal leaders to create a school that emphasises student achievement. This includes one of the strengths of this model as it fits the contexts of transformational leadership. However, the model falls short as it has not been empirically tested.

Although the model has not been empirically tested, it was fit for the study since it allows others in the school to take up an instructional leadership role. The instructional leadership role is not just for the head of the school but can be shared with others in the school management team. In this study, the instructional leadership role of the head of the department is investigated based on the view that the instructional leadership role is a shared leadership role.

The study sought to investigate the instructional leadership role of the HoDs and explore their perceptions regarding the influence of their instructional leadership

practices on students' performance. To achieve this, it was essential to define the instructional leadership functions. In this study, IL by the HoD is defined as everything the HoD does to lead, manage, supervise and evaluate instruction, and monitor students' performance. From the models discussed, the study came up with a hybrid of functions which the HoD can assume. These include defining and communicating goals for the department, managing instructional program by coordinating the curriculum, supervising and evaluating instruction, monitoring student progress, and creating a positive instructional climate. These functions were incorporated into the conceptual framework for the study, as seen later in the chapter.

#### ***2.2.4 Leadership theories related to Hallinger & Murphy's', Webers' and Krugs' instructional leadership models***

This study relates the models of instructional leadership discussed to Locke and Latham's goal-setting theory and transformational leadership.

#### ***2.2.5 Locke and Latham's goal-setting theory***

The study situates the instructional leadership models discussed within the goal-setting theory proposed by Locke and Latham (2002). According to the theory, human action, aware or unaware, is always driven by a purpose or a want of something that we still do not have (Locke & Latham, 2013). The purpose must be communicated to an individual/group to ensure that the individual or the group effectively uses it. Setting clear and challenging goals and adhering to the psychological axiom, "what gets measured gets done", is one way of giving purpose to the people a leader is leading (Locke & Latham, 2013).

The theory establishes that the most challenging goals create strong motivation among leaders. It requires appropriate individual attention, mobilised efforts, enhanced persistence, and setting of vision and strategies for accomplishing the goal. Besides this, the goal-setting theory holds that feedback is essential for enhancing performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). On the other hand, feedback without goal setting has little effect on performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). The three fundamental functions outlined above are consistent with instructional leadership and demonstrate the goal-setting theory in practice within the education setting.

Goal setting is among the vital leadership behaviours that significantly influence students' performance and school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Locke & Latham, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008). However, it is essential to understand that to be an effective leader capable of influencing student performance; the instructional leader must create a climate that integrates student instructional needs, staff expectations and fundamental task requirements (Robnison et al., 2008). Goal setting is one way which can be used to accomplish this objective in so far as it can be applied in ways that focus and coordinate the work of teachers (Locke & Latham, 2002; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Robinson et al., 2008)

Research indicates that principals who make academic performance a core organisational goal and work towards embedding goals in school and classroom routine procedures tend to have higher-performing schools (Goldring & Pasternack, 1994; Robinson, 2001; Robinson et al., 2008). In part, it can be said that academic achievement in high-performing schools increases partly as a function of the ability of the school head to establish and set goals that alter how the teachers conduct themselves in the classroom. Since the school head's leadership role as an instructional leader is shared, this can be extended to the HoDs. More so because the HoDs are closest to the classroom teachers and the students.

To be effective, Hod, as an instructional leader in his/her department, must set clear goals for the department. These goals would influence the understanding that he/she has of his/her instructional leadership role. More importantly, the goals would help inform the specific practices that the HoD would engage in to achieve the ultimate goal of improving students' performance. Furthermore, the HoD is supposed to give feedback to the teachers on how the department is performing as far as student performance is concerned.

To effectively communicate the goals and inspire the teachers to commit to the goals, the HoD and any other instructional leader must embrace the values of transformational leadership.

### **2.2.6 *Transformational leadership – a requisite of an instructional leader***

Transformational leadership seeks to change people and transform an organisation ( Salter, C., Green, M., Duncan, P., Berre, A., & Torti, C., 2010). A transformational leader works towards improving and transforming the institutions they serve. According to Salter et al. (2010), transformational leaders are uniquely able to inspire others to share and commit to the vision and work towards its attainment together. People are led to accomplish more than what is expected of them.

One attribute of transformational leaders is that they lead the people under them by effectively communicating the institution's vision. This is also typical of instructional leaders. Instructional leaders' purpose is to improve teaching and learning in the school. This can only happen when the school's instructional leader effectively communicates the school's vision and goals. The core purpose of the school is teaching and learning. For students to achieve at the end of the teaching and learning process, the school's instructional leaders must see that the role players are adequately inspired to share and commit to the vision and work towards its attainment.

In this regard, an effective instructional leader must embrace the values of transformational leadership. For the instructional leader to achieve the desired results, he/she must be able to inspire the followers very well—instructional leaders must have attributes of transformational leaders. The instructional leader with attributes of a transformational leader acts as a facilitator by exhibiting behaviours that enhance the capabilities of the teachers. They ensure that the teachers feel empowered to achieve goals of school improvement and student learning (Salter et al., 2010). Besides acting as facilitators, the instructional leader possessing attributes of an instructional leader support the teachers in the school to ensure the creation of learning communities that encourage dialogue and collaboration in accomplishing the school's vision ( Seashore L. K., Dretzke, B., & Wahlstrom, K., 2010; Salter et al., 2010)

### **2.3 Concept of instructional leadership**

A deeper understanding of the concept of instructional leadership can be gained by disaggregating the term 'instructional leadership' into its parts which are 'instruction' and 'leadership'.

#### **2.3.1 Instruction**

Different scholars define instruction differently. (Smaldino, Lowther, Russell, and Mims., 2008, p. 25) define instruction as an intentional effort to stimulate learning by arranging experiences to help learners achieve a desirable change in capability. According to Reigeluth & Carr-Chellman (2009), instruction is the deliberate arrangement of activities designed to achieve specific learning outcomes. Laska (1984) highlights that instruction is a process in the context of formal education occurring in a school or comparably structured setting. For Laska (1984), instruction comprises elements of instructional activity that represent the delivery system for the curricular content.

#### **2.3.2 Leadership**

Northouse (2018) defines leadership as the influence an individual has on an individual or a group to achieve a common goal. According to Yukl (2002), leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. Bush and Glover (2003) define leadership in education as a process of influence-based values and beliefs that lead to a 'vision' for the school, which is encapsulated in the school curriculum.

In terms of instruction and leadership, instructional leadership can be defined as the influence a leader within the school setting has on the teaching and learning process, the teacher, and student outcomes. The definitions of instructional leadership from the literature provided below further illustrate how merging the term 'instruction', and 'leadership' builds the term instructional leadership.

According to Bush and Glover (2003), instructional leadership is the kind of leadership focused on teaching and learning and on the behaviour of teachers in



working with students. The leaders' influence is targeted at student learning via teachers, and the emphasis is on the direction and impact of influence and not the process. (Bush & Glover, 2003, p. 12). Hallinger (2005a) defines instructional leadership (IL) as an educational leadership approach that focuses on the core responsibility of teaching and learning by defining the school vision, mission, and goals, managing the instructional program and promoting the school climate.

Instructional leadership is a type of leadership that supports the development of teaching and learning. Shoma and others (2016) describe IL in terms of three leadership dimensions: supervision and evaluation of instruction, curriculum coordination and monitoring of student performance.

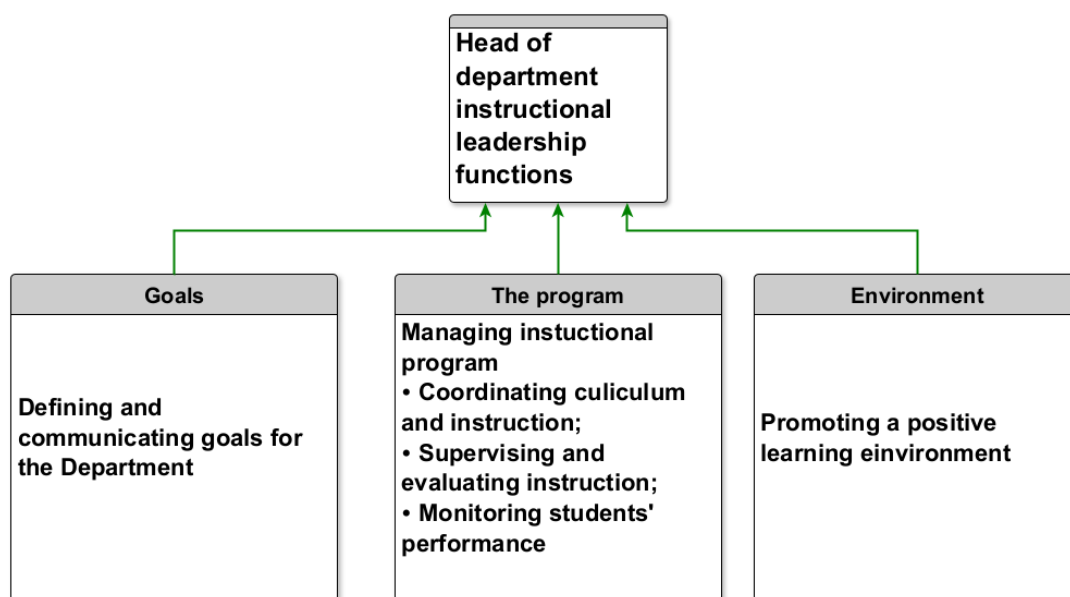
According to Heck and Hallinger (2014), IL is a leadership model focused on learning geared at increasing the school's capacity for improving teachers' instructional capacity. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2001) postulated that IL improves teaching and learning and includes listening, encouraging, and clarifying behaviours. From these different perspectives, it can be gathered that IL is a leadership model that is focused on teaching and learning. The purpose is to improve teacher instructional practices and student performance.

#### **2.4 Practices/functions of instructional leadership and evidence from research**

According to Quah (2011), instructional leadership practices are roles related to teaching and learning, involving the interaction between teachers, students, and the curriculum. The aims of IL are tied to the core work of schools, teaching and learning. Thus, IL practice must include the connection between IL and instruction itself.

As pointed out earlier, this study defines instructional leadership by aggregating some functions from Hallinger and Murphy's, Krug, and Weber's models.

The functions are presented in the figure below.



**Figure 2: Conceptualisation of Instructional leadership for Heads of Departments (Mazalale, E., 2022)**

The figure above depicts the practices or the functions of instructional leadership that the HoD can take up. The study defines these functions as central to the work of the HoDs as instructional leaders. First, defining and communicating the department's goals is essential for the HoD to indicate to the members of the department what is expected of them. The HoDs qualify to take up this function because, structurally, they occupy a position mainly focused on curriculum and instruction in their department. Therefore, central to their instructional leadership role is managing the instructional program. This function is at the heart of IL as it mainly focuses on the core purpose of the school, teaching and learning (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). In managing the instructional program, the HoD must coordinate the curriculum, supervise and evaluate instruction and monitor student progress. The HoD is also required to make sure that there is a positive instructional climate.

There is much literature concerning the practices of IL, mainly with a bias on principals (Blase & Blase, 2002; Bossert et al., 1982; Dwyer, 1985; Hallinger et al., 2020; O'Donnell & White, 2005). Much research has been done concerning the IL practices of principal /head teachers and not heads of department (Bhengu & Mkhize,

2013; Blase & Blase, 1999b, 2002; Carraway & Young, 2015; Harris et al., 2017b; Heck, 1992a; W. F. Smith & Andrews, 1989). Ali and Botha (2006) highlight that literature fails to point out the critical role HoDs could play in coordinating curriculum development, monitoring teaching and learning and regular assessment of educators in their various departments. Generally, a dearth of literature and studies points to the IL functions of the HoD.

Although the IL role of the principal/head teacher is well documented in the literature and well researched, other studies have found that there are practices/functions of IL pertaining to the management of instruction that is executed by HoDs and not principals/head teachers. For example, in Singapore, Ng, Nguyen, Wong & Choy (2015) carried out a study to explore principals' IL practices. Ng et al. (2015) reported that principals were actively involved in defining the school vision and promoting a positive school climate. The middle management teams were actively involved in curriculum implementation and classroom instruction. This agrees with what Kruger (2003) found out before in South Africa. Kruger (2003) explored IL in two effective secondary schools. Principals in both secondary schools indicated that many formal/structured IL functions, including curriculum management and supervision, are delegated to HoDs or subject heads. The heads pointed out that their influence on the instructional programme is more indirect than the HoDs.

In a related study, Bendikson, Robinson and Hattie (2012) in Central North Island carried out a study designed to identify indirect as well as more direct IL practices by secondary school principals and examine their impact on school performance and improvement. They reported that direct IL roles were primarily carried out by deputies and HoDs, except for goal and standard-setting. For instance, HoDs took the lead role in ensuring quality teaching activities, such as helping teachers with data and carrying out classroom observations.

The studies discussed here seem to point to one thing: HoDs are instructional leaders in the school responsible for the direct instructional roles that pertain to the school's core purpose, teaching and learning. These studies did not indicate whether the HoDs have such an understanding of their role in the school. Again, we do not know what

the HoDs do to execute their IL roles. Further to this, we do not know the bearing execution of their IL roles would have on teaching and learning and resultantly on student performance. The present study seeks to fill these existing gaps in research.

It is essential to understand that the IL role of the HoD is compounded by several other factors, although structures may be in place allowing HoDs to be instructional leaders. One such factor is their understanding of the concept of IL and their role as instructional leaders (Leithwood, 2016). How the HoDs understand the concept of IL would matter a lot. Their understanding would impact their IL practices which would, in turn, influence the management of instruction within their departments. Ultimately, this would have a bearing on student performance.

### ***Instructional leadership – a role that can be shared with HoDs***

The instructional leadership model originated as a leadership role that a school head could only take up. This notion has changed over the years with the evolution of transformational leadership. Instructional leaders' purpose is to improve teaching and learning in the school. Considering the interactions and processes involved in reaching this purpose, it becomes clear that the principal/head teacher cannot do it alone. IL could be shared by teachers who are well informed, have the expertise, and can exercise collaborative leadership (Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010). HoDs fit this description and therefore qualify as instructional leaders.

Other scholars have acknowledged the IL role of HoDs and have argued that HoDs are underutilised, if not untapped, source of IL (Leithwood, 2016). Others believe that HoDs attend to the details of curriculum delivery in their subjects, qualifying them as direct instructional leaders for their department (Siskin, 1991, 1994). In this regard, HoDs qualify as instructional leaders within their departments. Given the structure of secondary schools, it is the HoDs that are close to the teachers. The HoDs are therefore well placed to offer IL to teachers in their departments.

## **2.5 HoDs and the conceptualisation of their instructional leadership role**

The common understanding of IL among educationists seems to focus on the following characteristics: leadership influencing the quality of education in schools,

enhancing student performance, managing resources to effectively improve teaching and learning, pedagogic and curriculum management (Mestry & Pillay, 2013). HoDs are expected to act as instructional leaders (Smith et al., 2013). For HoDs to ably execute their roles as instructional leaders, they need to understand the concept and expectations of their position as instructional leaders within their departments.

Studies have been done regarding the IL role of the head of the department internationally. Not much has been articulated on HoDs' understanding of their IL role. Most of the studies that have been done have focused much on showing the ambiguity surrounding the role of the head of the department and other factors rather than understanding how HoDs view their role to support them (Paranosic & Riveros, 2017).

For example, Zepeda and Kruskamp (2007) carried out a study to examine the perspective of three high school department chairs and their work at providing instructional supervision to teachers within their departments in the USA. Instructional supervision is an IL function within the dimension of instructional management. In the study, Zepeda and Kruskamp (2007) sought to uncover the beliefs and practices of the high school departmental chairs. Three primary findings arose from the study. First, the high school department chairs experienced role conflict and ambiguity relative to providing instructional supervision. Second, the meaning of instructional supervision was intuitive to them and reflected differentiated approaches. Third, the departmental chairs encountered constraints in fulfilling their instructional supervisory role, including lack of time. Zepeda and Kruskamp (2007) concluded that the departmental chairs were not prepared to conduct instructional supervision, lacked instruction to fulfil their supervisory role, and had to design their roles because the principal support was not forthcoming. Besides the constraints that the departmental chairs were encountering, one could argue that the chairs lacked understanding of the IL role; hence their meaning of instructional supervision was intuitive.

In a related study, Clarke (2009) in Canada did a study to investigate the perceived nature of the leadership role of HoDs. Clarke (2009) reported that HoDs identified being a teacher as one of the main defining elements of their role. The HoDs

communicated different understandings of teacher leadership and how their roles demonstrated this. Most of the HoDs were unfamiliar with 'teacher leadership', another term for instructional leadership. However, they indicated their management and leadership roles. The leadership role included instructional leadership. In this study, Clarke (2009) did not focus on understanding the IL role of heads of departments but instead on their leadership role in general.

It can be concluded that the leadership role of HoDs is mainly instructional as they attend to details of teaching and learning within their departments. This study investigated the understanding of HoDs of their IL role. The understanding that HoDs can have of their IL role can influence their instructional leadership practices.

In South Africa, Ogina (2017) carried out a study that focused on how heads of departments understand their IL role. Ogina (2017) reported that HoDs perceived their leadership responsibilities as task-oriented and mainly focused on monitoring and controlling teachers' work. Their leadership included modelling, motivating, and establishing interpersonal relationships. However, Ogina (2017) found that the perceptions differed from one HoD to the other. It was further indicated that although the participants comfortably discussed the concept of teacher leadership, their descriptions and how they fulfilled their roles revealed an imbalance between leadership and management functions. This imbalance could indicate that the HoDs did not understand their IL role.

## **2.6 Management of instructional program; a central dimension of IL**

According to Hallinger (2003), managing the instructional program is focused on coordinating and controlling instruction and curriculum. The dimension involves three leadership functions: supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum and monitoring student progress. In this study, this dimension is regarded of particular importance to HoDs as it is mainly focused on teachers' instructional practices, teaching and learning and students' progress. Given the structure of the school, HoDs are well placed to manage instruction in the school.

Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2010) point out that managing teaching and learning is a role shared amongst the school's key players, namely, principals/head teachers, school management teams, HoDs and classroom educators (teachers). The authors point out that HoDs are responsible for ensuring effective teaching and learning within their departments. Larry (2003) points out that HoDs have a crucial responsibility of helping teachers implement curriculum into meaningful learning experiences and assess any strengths or weaknesses as it develops.

According to Dean (2002), HoDs as curriculum coordinators are expected to display the following responsibilities.

- Draw up schemes of work in the subject they are responsible for in consultation with the teachers.
- Ensure that resources needed by teachers are in adequate supply
- Recommend training for teachers on work in the subject or recommend appropriate courses.
- Develop systems of recording student progress in their subject together with the teachers.
- Help teachers in the classroom to teach the subject and support any teacher who is having difficulties.

Scheduling classes and assigning teachers to teach these classes, ordering supplies and instructional materials, including textbooks, overseeing departmental budgets, meeting with and assisting the administrative team are other duties highlighted in the literature (Mayers & Zepeda, 2002; Weller Jr, 2001; Wettersten, 1992). Numerous qualitative and quantitative studies have reported that paramount among these tasks and responsibilities of HoDs is the supervision and evaluation of teachers within their departments (Mayers & Zepeda, 2002; Weller, 2002; Wettersten, 1992).

The responsibilities listed in the literature are consistent with the roles of HoDs in Malawi's Secondary School Handbook (MoEST, 2014b). The Secondary School Handbook in Malawi governs the roles and responsibilities of head teachers, HoDs

and teachers (MoEST, 2014b). According to the handbook, the head of the department is involved in monitoring teaching and learning. As head of the curriculum, the HoD oversees and supervises the proper implementation of the curriculum by carrying out specific functions (MoEST, 2014b).

The roles highlighted in the handbook point to instructional leadership, particularly management of the instructional program. However, we know very little about what the HoDs do to execute their IL roles, especially in managing the instruction. The roles prescribed in the secondary school handbook point to instructional leadership defined in this study. The question that stands is how the HoDs manage instruction in the schools.

In South Africa, Ali and Botha (2006) conducted a study to evaluate the role, importance and effectiveness of Heads of Department in contributing to school improvement in Public Secondary Schools in Gauteng. One of their findings was that a good number (79%) of the respondents in the study referred to monitoring the teaching and learning and learning standards of educators and students as the main factor contributing to school improvement. The HoDs played a significant role in ensuring school improvement but lacked the competencies to lead and manage instruction.

Ali and Botha (2006) suggested that middle managers who include HoDs should develop a routine of analysis of results, planning for improvement, monitoring classroom practice, using observation and goal setting. The authors further pointed out that if teaching and learning are to improve considerably, HoDs will have to spend more of their time supervising teaching and learning. Therefore, there is a need for further research to investigate if HoDs are executing these IL functions and the effect this could have on student performance.

In a related study in Tanzania, Manaseh (2016) conducted a study which aimed at establishing IL practices of secondary school heads in managing the instructional program. He explored the head teachers' understanding of the concept of IL and investigated their role in managing the instructional programme. Manaseh (2016) found that heads of schools were ineffective in managing their instructional program.



Manaseh (2016) also pointed out that HoDs were not involved in curriculum coordination, resulting in ineffective instruction management. Their lack of involvement in this IL function could be because they do not perceive this function as part of their role. It is not clear in the study if the HoDs understand curriculum coordination as part of their role.

In a similar study, Toprakci, Beytekin, and Chipala (2016) carried out a study to explore IL in Malawi's best-performing religious secondary schools. The researchers also focused on the head teachers as instructional leaders. The study revealed that head teachers in the two schools were involved in instructional leadership. The head teachers in the schools placed more emphasis on academic results by allocating enough resources and ensuring effective use of instructional time and other resources than IL. Regarding curriculum management and leadership, the head teachers indicated that they are minimally involved as this role is shared with HoDs and subject leaders. The finding indicates that the HoDs take a leading role in managing and leading curriculum in these schools. What is not known is how the HoDs execute this IL role. Further, this study does not elucidate the implication on teaching and learning and, resultantly, student performance. This current study sought to investigate HoDs' understanding and practices of IL and what they perceive as the effect of these on student performance.

In a study to investigate what HoDs do to lead the teaching of Mathematics in South Africa, Jaca (2013) found that HoDs never received any formal preparation to lead the teaching of mathematics. HoDs provided leadership by monitoring teaching and teachers' work, checking lesson plans, doing class visits, checking students' books and assessment tasks, and doing follow-ups. The present study sought to explore what HoDs in Malawi's high-performing secondary schools do as instructional leaders in their departments.

From the studies presented in the preceding paragraphs, there seems to be an agreement in the literature that HoDs are *de facto* instructional leaders in their departments. However, there are still some areas that are not clear. First, we do not know if the HoDs consider and understand instructional leadership as their prominent

role. In some of the studies, for example, in Manassehs' study (Manasseh, 2016), the researchers focused on the heads of schools as instructional leaders. Interestingly, their studies revealed that the heads of the schools were ineffective in some functions of instructional leadership, like management of the instructional program. Based on this, it is imperative to investigate the practices of HoDs as instructional leaders in our schools and what specific practices they engage in as instructional leaders.

Furthermore, other studies have focused on the instructional leadership role of the HoD in specific curricular areas. For example, Jaca (2013) explore the leadership role of HoDs in leading the teaching of mathematics in South Africa. Typically, HoDs in secondary school are responsible for leading teachers specialising in different subjects within one umbrella. For example, a science HoD in Malawi leads teachers responsible for teaching mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, agriculture, and other science subjects. It is essential to investigate the overall instructional leadership role of HoDs in leading teachers specialising in different subjects.

Chipala et al. (2016) found that the Heads of schools shared other instructional leadership functions like curriculum management and leadership. The head of schools indicated that they are minimally involved in this function. This finding needs to be investigated further. We need to understand if the HoDs understand this as their role and what they do to carry out this delegated role.

## **2.7 Instructional leadership and students' performance**

To understand the contribution of instructional leadership to students' performance, it is essential first to understand what student performance is.

### **2.7.1 *Students' performance***

Student performance refers to pupils' success in meeting short-to-long term goals (Heaven & Bourne, 2016). This study defines student performance as students' success at the MSCE level. Different scholars have researched leadership and students' performance and found an association between the two variables. For example, Heaven and Bourne (2016) conducted a study investigating the effect of instructional leadership on students' performance. They noted a positive, though

weak, relationship of instructional leadership with students' performance. Alam and Ahmed (2017) did a similar study in Pakistan. They reported that instructional leadership impacted students' achievement in primary schools in Pakistan.

Research has been done to investigate the effect of instructional leadership on student performance. Several scholars in different countries have confirmed the positive influence of instructional leadership on students' academic performance (Hallinger 1992; Hallinger et al. 2015). However, the effect size of this relationship has been very varied (Marzano et al., 2001; Pan et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2008). For instance, studies by Hallinger and Heck (1998) and Witziers et al. (2003) revealed that the direct impact of principals' leadership on student academic achievement was relatively small. Moreover, the impact was mediated by teachers dealing directly with the students. Other studies have reported contrasting conclusions. For instance, Marzano et al. (2005) reported substantial effects of instructional leadership on students' academic achievement.

Besides variations in effect size, findings on instructional leadership and student performance also have varied with varying cultural contexts. Most studies done in USA schools have reported moderate effects, for example, Heck (2000), and a few have reported weak or small impacts of instructional leadership on student achievement, for example, Hallinger et al. (1996) and Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy (2005). Significant effects of instructional leadership on student achievement have been reported by Heck and others (1990). In other countries, weak or very small effects have been reported. For example, Bruggencate et al. (2012) conducted a study in the Netherlands to model the influence of school leaders on student achievement. They reported a small positive effect of school leadership on student performance.

Whilst accepting that many other factors influence student performance, the literature indicates that instructional leadership influences students' performance. This has been indicated in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies. In this study, the influence of IL on students' performance is investigated qualitatively from the perspective of the HoDs.

## **2.8 Instructional leadership functions associated with improved students' performance**

Literature has pointed out instructional leadership functions associated with improved student performance. According to Gamage, Adams and McCormack (2009), the following instructional leadership functions are associated with student performance: providing instructional leadership through discussion of instructional issues; observing classroom teaching and giving feedback; supporting teacher autonomy and protecting instructional time; providing and supporting improvement through monitoring progress, and using learner progress data for programme improvement.

Robinson et al. (2008) carried out a study to examine the relative impact of different types of leadership on students' academic and non-academic outcomes by meta-analysing findings of studies on the relationship between leadership and student outcomes. The study found five sets of leadership dimensions that were crucial and were associated with higher-performing schools. The leadership dimensions included establishing goals and expectations, resourcing strategically, planning, coordinating, evaluating teaching and the curriculum, promoting and participating in teacher learning and development, and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment.

The study revealed that the heart of IL, dimension number three, which involves planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, was carried out by subject specialists such as HoDs in large high schools (Robinson et al., 2008). Schools that performed above-expected levels were more likely to involve their staff in curriculum planning, visiting classrooms and reviewing evidence about student learning (Robinson et al., 2008).

Other scholars have indicated the positive and negative effects of some domains of IL on student performance. For example, Lee et al. (2012) carried out a study to examine the effects of different IL dimensions on student learning in Hong Kong secondary schools, whose broader high accountability policy environments notably characterise institutional contexts. They found that leadership practices focused on instructional management, such as encouraging teachers to consider new ways of teaching, holding high expectations of students and teachers, and enhancing student learning by

boosting the positive effect of students' attachment to their school on academic performance.

While accepting that instructional leadership is understood as leverage for improving diverse socio-cultural contexts, Lee et al. (2012) highlight that some IL practices may negatively impact school improvement and student learning and, ultimately, student performance, especially if it is culturally inappropriate. Lee et al.'s (2012) analysis indicated that students' learning was undermined by leadership practices connected to direct supervision of instruction, like inspecting students' homework, regularly observing classroom activities, and working with teachers to improve their teaching.

Lee, Walker, & Chiu (2012, p. 601) indicated that the negative moderating effect of principals' direct supervision suggests a detrimental linkage between negative perceptions held by teachers about leadership practices and student attachment to the school. This is so because what teachers do in the classroom influences the students' perceptions. On this basis, Lee et al. (2012) speculated that accountability-oriented leadership, like direct supervision, will either intentionally or unintentionally negatively influence students' attachment to their school. Ultimately, this would negatively affect student outcomes, as student attachment to their school is associated with positive student outcomes and academic performance.

The preceding discussion seems not to agree with what Robinson et al. (2008) pointed out in their study, mainly regarding direct instructional leadership functions. Robinson et al. (2008) pointed out that Schools that performed above-expected levels were more likely to be involved with their staff in curriculum planning, visiting classrooms and reviewing evidence about student learning (Robinson et al., 2008). The practices point to direct supervision of instruction. The authors indicated that much of this leadership in large high schools would be carried out by subject specialists such as HoDs.

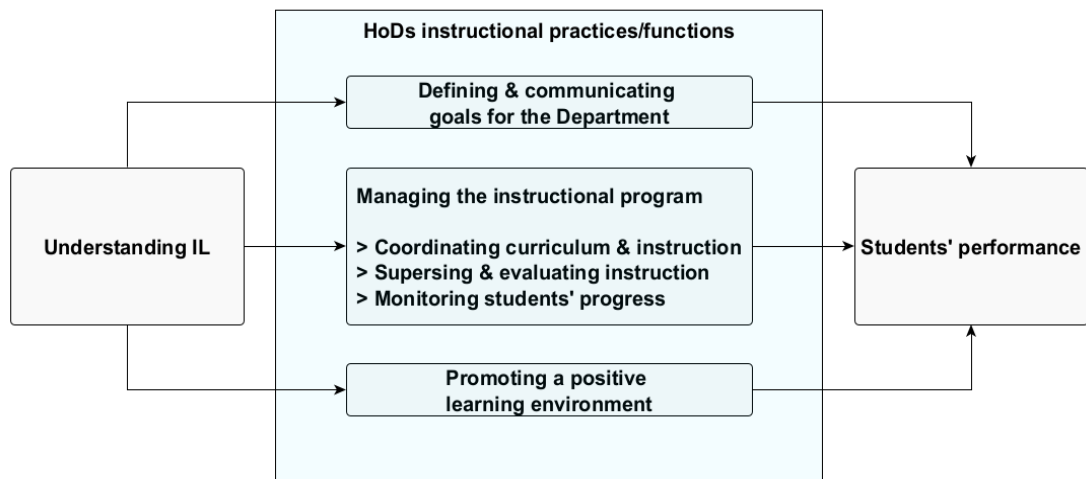
From this contention, we can only deduce that since the principal executed the role, the teachers found the practice more controlling and did not improve their instructional practices. Lee et al. (2012, p. 600) highlight that observing teachers' classroom activities for accountability is interpreted as principals' intrusion into

teachers' traditional domains. It is unknown whether the practices would have the same effect on the teachers if executed by others in the school management team like HoDs. Furthermore, it can only be speculated that teachers would welcome direct IL practices of HoDs more than principals, given their proximity and collegiality with the teachers.

## 2.9 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is the logical conceptualisation of an entire research project (Kivunja, 2018). A conceptual framework usually forms the basis for reframing the research questions and formulating hypotheses or making informal tentative predictions about the possible outcome of a study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). A research conceptual framework outlines possible courses of action or present a preferred approach to an idea or thought (Shields and Hassan, 2006). In other words, a conceptual framework acts like a map to provide coherence for an empirical inquiry.

Based on the literature reviewed, a conceptual framework was developed. Figure 3 below presents the conceptual framework.



**Figure 3:Diagrammatic illustration of the conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework was developed after reviewing and synthesising the literature on instructional leadership regarding HoDs and its association with student performance. According to this conceptual framework, the HoDs' understanding of instructional leadership would build the instructional leadership practices. The practices include defining and communicating the goals for the department, managing

the instructional program and promoting a positive learning environment. Central to the IL practices of the HoD is the management of the instructional program. These practices would influence the ultimate goal of improving students' performance. This can be investigated through the HoDs perspective.

It has been established that the HoDs can also take up the mantle of instructional leadership. In this regard, it is crucial to investigate the HoDs' understanding of IL as their role. It is conceptualised that the understanding that the HoDs have can build their IL functions/practices. Further, it is essential to investigate what the HoDs do within their departments as instructional leaders. Literature has stipulated different functions/practices of instructional leadership.

Furthermore, literature has pointed out the IL functions associated with high-performing schools. This study sought to explore the instructional leadership practices of HoDs in two high-performing schools. Central to the IL functions highlighted in the literature is the management of the instructional program. This study sought to understand what the HoDs do to manage the instructional program. The study goes further to understand the perception of the HoDs regarding the contribution of their instructional leadership practices to students' performance.

## **2.10 Chapter summary**

In this chapter, literature and research findings related to IL have been reviewed. Instructional leadership is one of the essential leadership models in the school that can contribute to students' performance. HoDs fit the description of instructional leaders in their departments, given their position in the school. The chapter has also discussed the study's theoretical and conceptual framework. In the next chapter, the design and methodology of the study are discussed.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology used in the study. First, the chapter discusses the theoretical paradigm that guided the choice of the study's research design and methodology. It then describes the research design and methodology employed to address the purpose of the study. After that, the chapter describes the sampling strategy, the target population for the study, the methods for data generation, and discusses how data were analysed. The trustworthiness, limitation of the study and ethical issues are also discussed.

#### **3.2 Research paradigm**

A paradigm is a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). This study was situated within the interpretive paradigm. Ontologically, the interpretive paradigm takes a more naturalistic, relativist stance that recognises multiple meanings and subjective realities (Finlay & Ballinger, 2006). An interpretive paradigm strives to understand and interpret the world regarding its actors (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 26). In this regard, it can be said that meanings and interpretations are of paramount importance in the interpretive paradigm. The primary role of the researcher in the interpretive paradigm is to explain social reality through the eyes of the participants. The paradigm was relevant to this study because the participants were investigated to give their views about their role as instructional leaders.

Regarding epistemology, the interpretive paradigm advances the view that knowledge is socially constructed (Maere, 2011). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), the interpretive paradigm is used to understand the subjective world of human experience. The paradigm was found fitting in this study since knowledge was created by investigating the instructional leadership practices of the HoDs and what they perceive as the effect of their practices on students' performance.



### **3.3 Research design**

A case study design was employed in this study. The case study method systematically gathers enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to enable the researcher to understand how it operates or functions effectively (Berg, 2001, p. 225). In a case study, a researcher can observe a single unit, an individual, a class, or a community (Cohen et al., 2007). The case study may be defined by characteristics defined by individuals and groups involved and can be defined by the participants (Cohen et al., 2007). In this study, the setting was the school, and the case was defined by all those leading the departments. Understanding the context in which the HoDs operate is integral to understanding their IL role. Therefore, a case study design was fitting to gain deeper insights into the HoDs IL role in the school departments. HoDs' IL role has not been adequately researched, as pointed out in the literature review. A descriptive case study design allows one to gain an in-depth understanding of issues that have not been well researched, and the design was indispensable for achieving the purpose of this study.

One main disadvantage of a case study is that it lacks scientific vigour and does not address issues of generalisability. Although this is the case, the case study was deemed helpful as it offered the opportunity of gaining an in-depth holistic view of HoDs' instructional leadership practices and what HoDs perceive as the effect of the practices on student performance.

### **3.4 Research approach**

Since the study's primary purpose was to investigate HoDs' understanding of IL practices and what they perceive as the effect of the same on student performance, the qualitative approach was adopted. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore the social or human problem. Taking place in the natural setting, relying on the researcher as the instrument of data collection, based on participants' meanings and being interpretive are some of the main characteristics of the qualitative research method. It was deemed proper to use the qualitative research method as the study certainly meets the characteristics of a qualitative approach.

According to Cohen et al. (2007), qualitative researchers believe that humans are active agents in constructing meaning, and the social context from which they arise must be well appreciated and understood. This, therefore, calls for a holistic interpretation of the participants' perspectives. The purpose of this study was to explore HoDs' understanding and practices of IL and what they perceived as the effect of their IL practices on students' performance by giving them a voice and a central core of the analysis. The qualitative approach was therefore indispensable as far as achieving this purpose was concerned.

### **3.5 Sampling**

The study was conducted at two high-performing secondary schools in the Southeast Education Division (SEED). The schools were purposively sampled as they represent a unique case of students' performance in national examinations at the MSCE level. HoDs were also purposively selected as the study sought to investigate their IL practices in the schools. Purposive sampling means that participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them holders of data needed for the study (Cohen et al., 2007). HoDs are instructional leaders within their various departments in the school. Their position qualified them as key informants in the study. Each school had three departments. Therefore, the total sample population was six (N = 6).

### **3.6 Data generation procedure**

The study explored the HoDs' IL practices and what they HoDs specifically do to manage the instructional program. Furthermore, the study investigated if the practice of IL by the HoDs has a bearing on students' performance. The study used documentary analysis and interviews to generate this data.

#### **3.6.1 Documentary analysis**

Documents present several advantages. These include enabling the researcher to obtain the language and words of participants, being accessible at the researchers' convenient time and offering an obtrusive source of information (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Documents collected were MSCE results score sheets and departmental meeting minutes.

The MSCE results helped create a picture of the performance of each department for three years. The minutes were important for understanding what they discussed in departmental meetings, which would indirectly reveal their role as HoDs.

Some challenges were encountered in generating data from documents. First, the files obtained from the different departments differed in the depth of the information contained. Other minutes were very brief, whilst others were comprehensive. Secondly, two out of the four HoDs did not have a department file but only presented unfiled documents. Data were classified to mitigate these challenges by identifying common themes related to instructional leadership practices.

### **3.6.2 Interview**

According to Jupp (2006, p. 157) interview is a method of data generation, information or opinion gathering that involves explicitly asking a series of questions. Interviews pose several advantages to the study. One outstanding advantage of interviews is that they allow the interviewer to follow up and probe responses, motives, and feelings.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were primarily used to generate the data. This was chosen because of their flexibility in approaching different respondents differently while covering the same data collection. The interviews covered a wide range of issues on HoDs IL and one of its dimensions of managing the instructional program. All questions were located within the relevant literature. The interviews helped dig more information from HoDs on their understanding of IL practices of HoDs. In addition, the interviews helped build an understanding of the HoDs' IL practices and what they perceive as the effect of these practices on student performance in their various departments.

The interviews were audio-recorded. Recording the interviews was crucial for getting an accurate account of the conversations without losing any data. Every recorded file was saved with the pseudo name of the interviewee to avoid confusion later. Six interviews were conducted, one with each HoD from the two schools. The average length of each interview was 40 minutes. An interview guide was used to ensure a

focused discussion of the issue under study. Besides, the guide allowed easy follow-up on all the unexpected threads of discussion that propped up during the interviews.

Challenges were encountered in generating data through interviews. First, the interviewees were not equally articulate. In addition, some were very concise in their responses, whilst others were verbose. To mitigate these challenges, notes were taken. This helped trace follow-up questions that needed to be posed to the respondents.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Essentially, qualitative data analysis involves a process of immersion in data, through which one can identify and interpret the experiences of the study participants (Hennink et al., 2011). In this study, the qualitative data analysis was approached thematically. Thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insights into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). Given (2008) points out that thematic analysis is primarily a descriptive strategy that facilitates the search for patterns of experience within a qualitative data set, the product of which is a description of the patterns and the overarching design that bonds them. According to Kuckartz (2014), thematic analysis involves seven phases. These are initial work with text, developing main topical categories, first coding process, compiling passages assigned to main categories, determining sub-categories, second coding process, and lastly, category-based analysis.

The initial work with the text's first phase involves highlighting essential passages and composing memos and case summaries (Kuckartz, 2014). Braun and Clarke (2012) point out that this phase involves immersing oneself in the data by reading and re-reading the textual data. At the end of this phase, an initial short case summary is composed.

In this study, data generated from interviews were audio-recorded. The first step was, therefore, to have textual data from the recorded interviews. This was done by having a verbatim transcript and a word-for-word replica of the interviews/discussion (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). Each audio recording was listened to several

times, and the transcription was read several times to gain a sense of the whole. From the transcript, important text was highlighted, and notes were composed. This allowed an immersion with the data and familiarisation with it. Main topical categories were developed from the research questions.

The second phase is developing the main thematic categories. According to Kuckartz (2014), the actual content of the text, that is, topics and sub-topics included, serves as analysis categories. The categories come from the responses to research questions or careful data reading. In this study, the categories were mainly developed from the research questions. The contextual data generated in the first data analysis stage was placed within the developed categories.

The third phase is the first coding process. This process is designed sequentially, whereby the researcher must work through the text section by section or line by line (Kuckartz, 2014). It was essential to determine which topics were being addressed in each passage of text to determine the initial codes. To do this, the text was read several times, and text passages were assigned to an appropriate category.

Phase four involves compiling all text passages that belong to the same primary category. This occurs concurrently with phase five (Kuckartz, 2014). Then sub-categories are created based on the data. Systemising and ordering the list of sub-categories, identifying the relevant dimensions, and summarising sub-categories follow. In this study, all similar text passages were compiled into one category. An in-depth interpretation was made to understand the issue under study. This was achieved by re-reading the transcript carefully and critically while focusing on a specific research question that formed a category. Sub-categories were developed inductively based on the data.

Phase six is the second coding process. In this phase, the coded text passages are assigned to main sub-categories (Kuckartz, 2014). This systematic process requires the researcher to go through the data again. In this phase, the coded text passages were assigned within each main category to newly defined sub-categories. To achieve

this, it was essential to go through the data repeatedly. Using the categories developed in the second phase, the data was coded into their respective sub-categories.

The seventh phase is the analysis process and presentation of results. The focus in this phase is on the topics and sub-topics. These were developed from the categories and sub-categories developed in the preceding stages. Conclusions were drawn from the data by looking at the pattern in the themes. The findings were then related to the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. Possible interpretations were made. Writing and analysis are interwoven, so the last step was to perfect the report.

There were some challenges in analysing the data thematically. First, there was a volume of data generated from the interviews. To overcome this challenge, a content analysis table was generated. This helped to identify the common codes used by the participants. In this way, items that were related were easily clustered. In addition to this, many issues emerged from the interviews, and it was not easy to keep focus. This challenge was overcome by coding the items in the data using labels derived from research questions. The patterns that emerged helped come up with categories.

### ***3.7.1 Documentary analysis***

Documentary analysis was employed in the study. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003, p. 35), documentary analysis involves the study of existing documents to either understand their substantive content or illuminate deeper meanings that their style and coverage may reveal. Document analysis involved analysing score sheets of MSCE results for the past three years and analysing departmental meeting minutes. The score sheets provided information about students' performance in the two schools. It was essential to know what the performance had been like and relate it with the information given by the HoDs during the interviews.

The data from the departmental meeting minutes were analysed to check for commonly discussed issues. The issues discussed indirectly revealed what the HoDs' role encompassed. The issues were linked to the categories and sub-categories developed from the transcribed interviews. This offered an opportunity to examine the issue from a different perspective.

The final step was to draw conclusions from the analysed data. This step helped to determine whether the research question was answered sufficiently. New questions and issues that emerged during the research process were identified.

Documentary analysis poses several advantages to a study but also disadvantages. First, not all people are equally articulate. Secondly, documents may be highly biased and selective, as they were primarily not intended to be regarded as research data but were written for a different purpose, audience and context (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 201). These disadvantages were toned down through the interviews conducted with the HoDs. This was possible as the data from the interviews and the documents cross-validated each other.

There were some challenges in analysing the data gathered from the documents. First, the information in the files was not the same in terms of depth. Other files were comprehensive and articulate enough, while others were not. Furthermore, some information in the file was not a perfect match for what the study was investigating. To overcome these challenges, the focus was only placed on the agenda that matched the themes generated from interview data.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness of the study**

Trustworthiness is the consistency and dependability of the data (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). One criterion of achieving the trustworthiness of a study is credibility. Polit & Beck (2010) defines credibility as the confidence in the truth of the study and the findings. Credibility involves providing assurance and fit between the reality presented by the informants and the researchers' reconstruction and representation of the reality presented by the informants (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). In this study, credibility was ensured by using triangulation, using verbatim quotes, and piloting.

#### **3.8.1 Triangulation**

According to Cohen et al. (2007), triangulation is a method used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings. First, involving HoDs from different departments as key informants in the study helped triangulate the data sources. This was possible because the views and experiences of one HoD were verified against

those of other HoDs. Resultantly, a richer picture of the issue under study was constructed.

In addition, site triangulation was achieved by involving HoDs from two schools. This site triangulation ensured that the effect of factors unique to one school was reduced in the study.

### ***3.8.2 Use of verbatim quotes***

Verbatim quotations are a fundamental source of raw data and reveal the informants' emotions and experiences in qualitative research (Patton, 2002). Verbatim quotes were used in this study to establish credibility. Using verbatim quotes ensured accuracy and completeness from the viewpoint of the HoDs.

### ***3.8.3 Piloting***

Piloting is essential in conducting qualitative research as it allows the researcher to test the study tools and gain some practice in interviewing (Majid, Othman, Mohamad, Lim, & Yusof, 2017). The study tool was piloted at Domasi Demonstration Secondary School. Piloting allowed the identification of some gaps in the study tool. For instance, through the pilot, it was realised that the HoDs had a tough time conceptualising their instructional leadership role. Therefore, a checklist of the roles that encompassed instructional leadership as defined in this study was developed. This step contributed to the credibility of the study.

## **3.9 Ethical issues**

Cohen et al. (2007) point out that ethics concern right and wrong, good and bad. In this regard, one must consider how ethical principles abide by the purposes, contents, method, reporting, and outcomes. This study's ethical principles included gaining access and acceptance from gatekeepers, respect for anonymity and confidentiality, informed consent, avoiding deception and non-maleficence.

### ***3.9.1 Gaining access and acceptance from gatekeepers***

Formal permission was sought from the gatekeepers to gain access to the required data. Creswell (2009, p. 229) defines gatekeepers as individuals at research sites that provide access to the site and allow or permit a qualitative research study to be



undertaken. In this study, the gatekeepers included the administrators at the Education Department and the head teachers at the selected schools. To be readily accepted to conduct the study in the selected schools', clearance was sought from the gatekeepers. This was done by obtaining letters of support and affirmation from them. An introductory letter from the Education Foundations department was obtained. This was presented to the head teachers in the schools. Before visiting the schools, an appointment was first booked with the head teachers. Later, appointments were booked with the HoDs.

### **3.9.2 *Informed consent***

Informed consent serves to inform participants about the voluntary nature of the study and understand the risks and benefits of participation (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Before conducting the study, the purpose, objectives, and importance of conducting the study were clearly explained to the participants. They were allowed to ask questions in relation to what was explained to them. The participants were notified that the interviews to be conducted with them would be audio recorded. After this, they read and signed the consent form. The consent form included an information sheet outlining the background, purpose, objectives of the study, how the data collected would be used, what participation was required of them, and how much time they would spend participating in the study.

### **3.9.3 *Respect for anonymity and confidentiality***

Issues of anonymity and confidentiality were considered in the study. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003, p. 67), anonymity means the identity of those taking part not being known outside the research team. Assuring participants that what they say would be kept in strict confidence is essential for earning their trust and thus for eliciting good data. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used. The participants were also assured of confidentiality. It was emphasised that all the information they provided would not be used for any purpose except that intended for the study.

### **3.9.4 *Beneficence and non-maleficence***

This ethical dimension requires that the interviewees be informed that the research may be to their advantage and will not harm them. Non-maleficence (do no harm) is

enshrined in the Hippocratic oath, in which the principle of *primum non nocere* (first of all, do no harm) is held as a guiding precept (2007, p. 58). In this study, the participants were informed of the potential benefit of the study, which is mainly improvement of their IL practices, improved teaching and learning and resultantly improved student performance. The participants were assured that no harm would befall them because of participating in the study. This information was provided to them before conducting the interviews.

### **3.10 Limitations of the study**

The study investigated the IL practices of HoDs and the perceived contribution to students' performance. The study took a purely qualitative approach, and the findings cannot be generalised to other secondary schools in the country. However, the study did not aim to derive generalisable findings. Nevertheless, a quantitative study would be essential to determine the relationship between IL practices of HoDs and student performance.

### **3.11 Chapter summary**

In this chapter, the research methodologies that were designed to achieve the purpose of the study have been outlined. The advantages and disadvantages of the methods employed in this study have been discussed with reference to relevant literature. Literature supporting the selected method, tool and design of the study has been provided. Ethical considerations have also been discussed. Further, the gaps emanating from the discussion of the methods have been moderated have also been discussed. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter presents and discusses the research findings of the study on HoDs IL practices and the contribution to students' performance. The presentation and discussion are centred on four research sub-questions that guided the study. The research questions were:

1. What is HoDs' understanding of instructional leadership?
2. What specific practices do HoDs carry as instructional leaders in their departments?
3. How do the HoDs manage instructional program?
4. What is the HoDs' perceived contribution of their IL practices to students' performance?

#### **4.2 Description of the sample**

This description serves to clarify the pseudo names used in the discussion of the findings for ethical reasons. Two schools were purposively sampled in SEED. The two schools are henceforth referred to as **Diamond** and **Gold**. These two schools were selected considering their outstanding performance in MSCE results for the past three years. Apart from this, the schools are similar in terms of administrative setup. In addition, the HoDs in the two schools had served in the position of HoD for more than five years. This makes them unique participants as they have experience as HoDs so that they would give more reliable information on their role as HoDs. All the HoDs had been teachers for more than eight years at the schools. HoDs from Diamond secondary school were given the following pseudo names, Mr Green, Mr Brown, and Mrs Pink. HoDs from Gold secondary school were given the following pseudo names, Mr Black, Mr Tan, and Mr Gray.

**Table 1: Biographical data of HoDs from the two schools**

| <b>Name of school and HoD</b>   | <b>Name of department</b> | <b>Years served as a teacher</b> | <b>Years served as HoD at the school</b> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>Diamond Secondary School</b> |                           |                                  |                                          |
| Mr Green                        | Science                   | 20                               | 9                                        |
| Mr Brown                        | Humanities                | 26                               | 10                                       |
| Mrs Pink                        | Languages                 | 11                               | 6                                        |
| <b>Gold Secondary School</b>    |                           |                                  |                                          |
| Mr Black                        | Science                   | 20                               | 13                                       |
| Mr Tan                          | Language                  | 20                               | 12                                       |
| Mr Gray                         | Humanities                | 25                               | 6                                        |

### **4.3 Findings and discussion**

The discussion in the following sections is presented as per the research questions.

#### **4.3.1 HoDs' understanding of IL and their role as instructional leaders**

HoDs were asked about their understanding of instructional leadership and role as instructional leaders. First, on their understanding of instructional leadership, the analysed interview data revealed that all the six HoDs from both schools were hearing the term instructional leadership for the first time. It was clear that they were not familiar with the term. Only three HoDs out of the six indicated knowing something about instructional leadership. However, it was apparent from their responses that they were unfamiliar with the term, so they developed their meaning of IL right there and then when they were asked about it. This was clear from their responses.

For example, Mr Green had this to say:

I do not have full knowledge of what IL means. Nevertheless, from my perspective, I feel that it is like when you are leading by giving instructions to those people under you. So that is the way I get it, but I

am not sure if that is the correct meaning of instructional leadership (Interview with Mr Green, 24/07/18).

While Mrs Pink defined IL in the following way:

Instructional leadership is a type of leadership whereby a person is given proper direction on some aspects to be done and how things can be achieved (Interview with Mrs Pink, 25/07/18).

Mr Black indicated familiarity with the concept of IL and pointed out that he attended training on the same. However, Mr Black failed to articulate what instructional leadership is clearly.

I have heard about instructional leadership and have attended training on instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is mainly focused on the instructions we give to the teachers. (Interview with Mr Black, 24/07/18).

The study's framework conceptualised that IL practices are built by understanding IL. The findings revealed that the HoDs did not understand the IL concept, though some indicated familiarity. This finding coincides with what Clarke (2009) found in her study. Clarke (2009) found that HoDs lacked familiarity with the language of teacher leadership, which in this study is referred to as instructional leadership. The participants in her study were unfamiliar with the complex construct of teacher leadership and therefore developed their idea of teacher leadership. Clarke (2009) indicated that some asked for clarification and definition of the term along with its background and evolution.

#### **4.4 Understanding their role as instructional leaders**

Since the HoDs did not understand the term instructional leadership or the concept of IL, they were asked a follow-up question to probe their instructional leadership role. The HoDs had a varying understanding of their role as instructional leaders. Four of the six HoDs understood their role mainly focused on controlling and supervising teachers. Their articulation of their understanding of their instructional leadership role revealed that their understanding was pinioned on instructional management, not

instructional leadership. This can be seen from the selected quotes from Mr Tan and Mr Brown below:

As HoD, I understand that my role is to steer the department's functions and monitor my colleagues in the department. (Interview with Mr. Tan, 25/0718).

As HoD, I understand that my role is to supervise colleagues and monitor how they handle themselves in the classes. I also evaluate the teachers by looking at their schemes of work and lesson plans. (Mr. Brown, 24/0718).

Other HoDs understood their role as task-oriented and mainly geared toward improving teacher practice within the department. They understood themselves as being accountable for what happens in the department.

Mrs Pink articulated the following:

I understand my role mainly focused on leading teachers in teaching and learning to achieve excellent performance for the learners in the subjects under our department (Interview with Mrs Pink, 23/07/18).

Mr Black related something in line with Mrs Pink:

My role is mainly focused on leading teachers in teaching and learning to achieve excellent performance for the learners in the subjects under our department. I support and motivate the teachers in my department by organising training that helps improve their teaching practices. (Interview with Mr. Black, 25/07/18).

The HoDs had a mixed understanding of their instructional leadership role within their departments. Primarily, the understanding was focused on supervising teachers' work. This agrees with Ogina's findings in South Africa. Ogina (2017) found that the HoDs regarded monitoring and controlling as their primary responsibility.

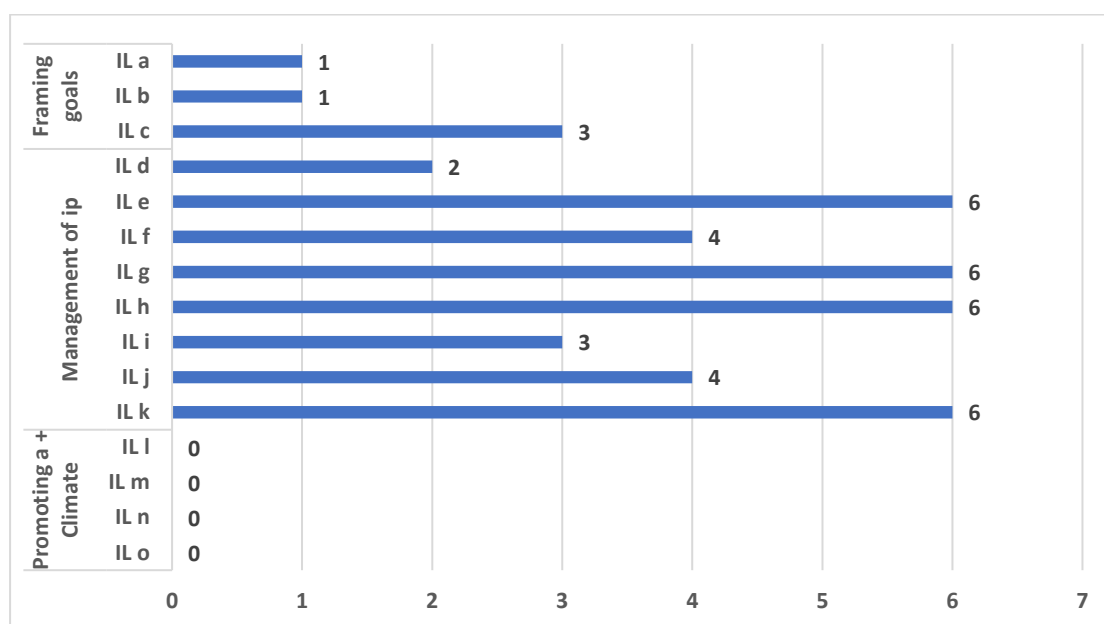
To further probe their understanding of their instructional leadership role, the HoDs were given a list of statements regarding their conceptualisation of their instructional leadership role. They were required to tick against roles which they thought matched their understanding of their instructional leadership role. In this study, the

instructional leadership role definition encompassed defining and communicating goals, managing the instructional program and promoting a positive learning environment. Therefore, the list included different roles under these three main functions. The roles are shown in the table below.

**Table 2: Instructional leadership functions defined in this study**

| <b><i>Framing and communicating goals for the department</i></b> |                                                                                                                  |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| a.                                                               | Develop a focused, wide goal for the department                                                                  |  |
| b.                                                               | Communicate goals effectively                                                                                    |  |
| c.                                                               | Discuss goals with teachers during departmental meetings                                                         |  |
| <b><i>Management of instructional program</i></b>                |                                                                                                                  |  |
| d.                                                               | Ensure that classroom priorities of teachers are consistent with the set departmental goals and school goals     |  |
| e.                                                               | Guide teachers in planning schemes of work and checking if the work is being done.                               |  |
| f.                                                               | Visit classrooms to supervise                                                                                    |  |
| g.                                                               | Review students' work when evaluating classroom instruction by checking mark books                               |  |
| h.                                                               | Discuss item analysis of tests with teachers in the department to identify weaknesses in the instruction program |  |
| i.                                                               | Meet individually with teachers to discuss the academic progress of students in subjects within the department   |  |
| j.                                                               | Evaluate teachers to improve instruction practices                                                               |  |
| k.                                                               | Inform the teachers about curricula materials available in the department                                        |  |
| <b><i>Promoting a positive instructional climate</i></b>         |                                                                                                                  |  |
| l.                                                               | Protect instructional time                                                                                       |  |
| m.                                                               | Provide incentives for teachers                                                                                  |  |
| n.                                                               | Promote professional development                                                                                 |  |
| o.                                                               | Maintain high visibility                                                                                         |  |

The chart below represents the results obtained after the HoDs marked against the roles that matched their understanding of their instructional leadership role.



**Figure 4: Instructional leadership functions that matched HoDs understanding of their instructional leadership role**

From the chart, it can be noted that the roles under the management of the instructional program matched the understanding of their IL role more than the other roles. Prominent among these were IL e (guide teachers in planning schemes of work and checking if the work planned is being done), IL g (review students' work when evaluating classroom instruction by checking mark books), IL h (discuss item analysis of tests with teachers in department to identify weaknesses in the instruction program) and IL k (inform the teachers about curricula materials available in the department). The understanding of their role only revolved around supervising teachers' work with the goal of good performance of the students. Only three HoDs understood defining and communicating goals as part of their instructional leadership role. Promoting a positive instructional climate was not understood as part of their role as none of the HoDs ticked against the roles under this.

#### **4.4.1 Specific practices of HoDs as instructional leaders**

On study research question number 2, the HoDs were asked about their specific practices as instructional leaders. The HoDs described several practices comprising



overseeing teaching and learning, being a link between the teachers in their department and the administration, making sure that the departments are well resourced with both human resources and teaching and learning materials, and allocating teachers in various classes according to subject specialisation and calling for departmental meetings. These roles are discussed as subthemes in the following subsections.

#### ***4.4.1.1 Overseeing the teaching and learning process***

The HoDs indicated overseeing teaching and learning as one of their specific instructional leadership practices

Mr Gray had this to say:

As a head of the department, my job is to take the leading role in ensuring that the department members are doing their work. That is an umbrella of what is supposed to be done by the HoD. (Interview with Mr. Gray, 23/07/18).

Mr Green related something similar:

As HoD, I oversee the teaching and learning process within my department. I am supposed to guide teachers on how they can conduct their professional ethics. In addition, I am supposed to monitor the performance of teachers and students (Interview with Mr Green, 25/0718).

The preceding finding revealed that the HoDs practices included monitoring and controlling the teaching and learning process in the school. This was consistent with the functions of the HoDs prescribed in the Malawi Secondary School handbook.

Bennett, Woods, Wise and Newton (2007) highlight that monitoring and controlling constitutes a management process whereby the HoD ensures that teaching and learning are happening and that the schools' learning objectives are being achieved. This function requires the HoD to be familiar with formal ways of control such as written lesson plans, classroom observation and feedback, assessment moderation and subject meetings (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003).

#### **4.4.1.2 A link between the teachers in their department and the administration**

The study found that the HoDs specific IL practices linked the teachers in their department and the administration.

The following is what Mr Brown pointed out:

I act as a link between the teachers and the heads on how the department runs. (Interview with Mr. Brown, 23/07/18).

This agreed with what Mr Gray remarked as follows:

As head of the department, I liaise with the administration on issues concerning the department. The issues we liaise with the management include resources, staffing and performance of teachers and students in various subjects (Interview with Mr Gray, 25/07/18).

This finding revealed that the HoDs acted as a liaison between the management and the teachers within their departments. This coincides with what Paranosic (2017) found out. From the HoDs' perspectives, Paranosic found that the liaison role comprised a large part of their responsibilities and was a springboard from which they talked about other roles and issues.

#### **4.4.1.3 Resource advocate**

All the HoDs acknowledged that they were responsible for ensuring the availability of teaching and learning resources and staff in their departments.

Mr Brown explained as below:

As HoD, I must ensure that the department has enough teaching and learning resources like textbooks. I advise the head to request new teachers whenever the department is understaffed. (Interview with Mr. Brown, 23/07/18).

Furthermore, Mr Gray pointed out that he must make requisitions of resources needed in the department. This is what he said:

At the end of each term, we are required to write requisitions for the department so that the administration can plan well for the next term (Interview with Mr Gray, 24/07/18).

A review of departmental meeting minutes also revealed that issues of teaching and learning resources were frequently discussed. Members of the department, on several occasions, requested the HoD as their advocate to request their need for resources to the administration.

Dean (2002) points out that HoDs are required to ensure that adequate resources are available for teaching the subjects and that teachers get the requisite assistance in the classroom. HoDs in Paranositic and Riveros' study (2017) regarded this as a clerical function which was mundane but essential to the functioning of the department. Every department head interviewed in Paranositic and Riveros' (2017) study mentioned ordering supplies, getting stuff or providing consumables as part of their job. Just like in the present study, HoDs cited this as one of the essential things that members in the department asked the HoDs to do for them.

#### ***4.4.1.4 Allocating teachers in various classes according to subject specialisation***

Allocating teachers to different classes according to their areas of specialisation was also a practice the HoDs pointed out. Mr Brown highlighted the following:

As HoD, at the beginning of each academic year, I have to allocate the teachers according to the number of teachers we have in the department. That is done in consultation with the teachers and again considering their capabilities (Interview with Mr Brown, 24/0718).

The preceding findings regarding the specific practices HoDs carry out in the schools as instructional leaders revealed that they were acting as instructional leaders in their departments to a certain degree. As leaders in particular curricular areas, HoDs are required to ensure high standards of teaching and learning within their departments. From the findings presented, the HoDs in the two schools seem to be working towards this. They ensure high standards by employing different strategies pointing to their department's instructional leadership role.

The study's conceptual framework theorises that understanding the concept of instructional leadership builds IL practices. The findings in this study seem to dispute this conceptualisation. The evidence is that, notwithstanding the lack of understanding

of IL, the HoDs engaged in IL practices. It can be deduced that the HoDs practice some aspects of IL as a policy requirement since the Malawi secondary school handbook points out the roles of HoDs that are consistent with IL.

#### ***4.4.2 Managing instructional program***

The third research question was meant to investigate the practices that HoDs carry out in managing the instructional program. Management of instructional program is the heart of instructional leadership. This dimension of IL is focused more on the teaching and learning process. This study upheld that the HoDs' role is mainly focused on managing teaching and learning within their respective departments. In this aspect, the HoDs were assessed in three areas: curriculum coordination, monitoring teaching and learning, and monitoring students' performance, as discussed in the following sub-themes.

##### ***4.4.2.1 Curriculum coordination***

Curriculum coordination requires structuring programs to ensure coherence and alignment within specific curricula and across programs. Curriculum coordination is one crucial aspect of the HoDs' role in ensuring that the curriculum is implemented effectively and coherently. The HoDs were asked if they coordinate the curriculum and what they do to coordinate the curriculum. All the HoDs indicated that they are responsible for curriculum coordination. They indicated that they ensure curriculum coordination by calling for departmental meetings, supporting teamwork, and discussing in-service training.

###### ***4.4.2.1.1 a) Calling for departmental meetings***

The evidence from the interviews revealed that all the HoDs, except for one, call for departmental meetings. Through the departmental meeting, they said they have an opportunity to remind teachers of the curricular objectives and ensure that they align their plans with the secondary school curricular objectives.

Mr Brown from Diamond school had this to say during departmental meetings:

We are not told how many meetings we should have in a term, but at least we have one in the term. When issues crop up through the term, I call for emergency meetings which are not formal as usual

departmental meetings. The formal departmental meetings are not as frequent as you would expect. (Interview with Mr. Brown, 24/07/18).

Mrs Pink from the same school indicated that departmental meetings are rarely held as teachers require allowances, and the school is not ready to release money for allowances. She related the following:

I rarely conduct departmental meetings. This is so because teachers expect to receive allowances at the end of the meeting, and the school is not ready to release the allowances. Whenever there are issues, I speak with individual teachers. This academic year we only had one departmental meeting outside the campus, and the teachers were happy because they received the allowances (Interview with Mrs Pink, 23/07/18).

The secondary school handbook points out the conduction of departmental meetings as one of the functions of the HoD. It was surprising to learn from this HoD that meetings were rarely conducted. Again, it is essential to note that the response of Mrs Pink was contradictory since she also pointed out that they had a meeting outside the school campus where allowances were disbursed. It seems the meetings within the department do take place when the school is ready to release funds for allowances for the teachers. Furthermore, it was interesting that the same HoDs who indicated that meetings were rarely conducted managed to produce unfiled documents, of which some were minutes of departmental meetings.

All the HoDs from the Gold school indicated that they are required to have departmental meetings and that they do conduct the meetings. A review of the files for the departments showed that the meetings were conducted at least twice every term.

The findings indicated that the HoDs from the two schools used varied approaches regarding departmental meetings' conduction. In one school conducting a departmental meeting at least twice a term was a must. A review of the departmental meetings' minutes revealed that the HoDs strictly followed this.

#### *4.4.2.1.2 b) Supporting teamwork*

The study found that HoDs also coordinate curriculum by supporting and encouraging teamwork among the department members. They pointed out that they encourage teachers teaching the same subjects in the department to plan together and consult each other. They said this ensures optimal continuity in what the students learn across the forms. Mr Tan from Gold school pointed out that to ensure the curriculum is well-coordinated, he encourages teachers teaching the same subjects to work together as a team and consult each other whenever they encounter a challenge in their subject of specialisation. Mr Tan said this:

I encourage the teachers in my department to work together as a team. This ensures coherence in what the students learn in our curricula area. Some concepts are interdisciplinary. Thus, the teachers must work together to ensure no discrepancies in presenting such concepts. (Interview Mr. Tan, 24/0718).

A review of departmental minutes showed that teamwork was encouraged and discussed during departmental meetings. Hallinger and Wang (2015) allude that the aspect of curriculum coordination is supported by a more significant interaction of teachers within and across grade levels. (Malloy, 2017) points out that positive student academic performance is enhanced by teamwork in teaching. Malloy (2017) further points out that teamwork in teaching assists teachers in discovering strategies from one another on how to tackle challenges encountered by teachers and students in a particular subject.

#### *4.4.2.1.3 c) Organising in-service training*

The HoDs also indicated that they organise in-service training for teachers in the department to ensure that there is the coordination of the curriculum in areas like teaching methods/strategies, assessment techniques, formulation of examinations and coverage of cross-cutting issues.

For example, Mr Green explained:

We ensure that the curriculum is well coordinated by organising in-service training. Teachers in the department may raise issues regarding

teaching methods, assessment or any other issue concerning the subjects taught in the department. In such a case, we organise an inset to address the issues. This helps the teachers improve their practices and harmonise the teaching and learning across the forms. (Interview with Mr. Green, 23/07/18).

HoDs, as instructional managers within their departments, have an essential responsibility to create and support conditions under which quality teaching can occur (Bush, 2003). In-service training is one way of creating and supporting conditions required for quality teaching and learning, resulting in improved student performance. In-service training falls within continuous teacher development initiatives that promote teacher learning and development. As an instructional leader, the HoD is expected to meet the development needs of the members within the department. Robinson et al. (2008) highlight that this leadership dimension is strongly associated with positive student outcomes, a measure of student performance. Continuous professional development of the teachers would result in improved instructional practices. Ultimately, this would contribute to improved student performance.

From the findings, the HoDs coordinate curriculum by using several approaches. These include calling for departmental, supporting teamwork and organising in-service training. As indicated above, these practices do influence teacher practices and, resultantly, student performance.

#### ***4.4.2.2 Monitoring teaching and learning***

The HoDs were asked to explain what they do to monitor teaching and learning. Data analysis indicated that the HoDs monitor teaching and learning by checking schemes, checking, and signing lesson plans and conducting class observations. It was noted that the approaches differ from HoD to HoD and from one department to the other. What the HoDs do to monitor teaching and learning is discussed in the following sub-sections.

#### 4.4.2.2.1 a) *Checking schemes and records of work*

All the HoDs indicated that they check teachers' schemes and records of work. They indicated that they check the schemes and records of work planned by the teachers at the beginning of each term and every fortnight as the term progresses. This, they indicated, helps to follow up on syllabus coverage.

For instance, Mr Brown had this to say:

I oversee the process of preparing schemes and records of work. I ensure that every teacher has a plan for the teaching and learning process. Every fortnight, I check the schemes to ascertain that what was planned is being done (Interview with Mr Brown, 24/07/18).

Mr Black concurred with this and commented saying:

I check schemes for the teachers within my department. Checking of schemes is done as a way of monitoring teaching and learning. This falls within pre-monitoring and post-monitoring of teaching and learning. At the beginning of the term, I check the teachers' schemes in my department. I check the teachers' strategies because they must primarily be student-centred. During the term, I check the schemes and records of work every fortnight. This helps ascertain the teacher's planned delivery (Interview with Mr. Black, 25/07/18).

#### 4.4.2.2.2 b) *Checking and signing lesson plans*

The data analysis revealed the differences among HoDs for the same schools and between the two schools regarding the writing of lesson plans. Mr Black from Gold school indicated that he checks and signs lesson plans for the teachers in his department as a way of monitoring teaching and learning. This was the view from one HoD:

I do check and sign lesson plans. Lesson plans are supposed to be signed daily. As I pointed out earlier, monitoring of teaching and learning falls into three categories, pre-monitoring, actual monitoring, and post-monitoring. So, writing lesson plans is essential in actual teaching and learning. I use this when evaluating the lesson delivery. (Interview with Mr. Black, 25/07/18).



Mr Tan from the same school had a contrary view of lesson planning as a way of monitoring teaching and learning. The HoD indicated the following:

Lesson plans are not written. This is contrary to what the new curriculum policy stipulates. Under the new curriculum, lesson plans are a policy requirement, and every teacher should write a lesson plan for every teaching period. This is not being done on the ground. It is challenging for people to write because it does not make sense. On my part as an individual, having a plan in my head is enough. I internalise it, and every time I know where to begin. (Interview with Mr. Tan, 24/07/18).

The other HoDs indicated that as HoDs, they are supposed to check and sign lesson plans, but they do not do it as teachers do not write the lesson plans.

Mr Green commented on what happens:

Lesson plans are not written. This is a huge challenge here. However, I hope that things will change because we had officials from the division last term, and they emphasised that it is a must that teachers write lesson plans. (Interview with Mr. Green, 23/07/18).

Lesson planning is part of a management process to ascertain that teaching and learning are taking place and that the schools' objectives are being achieved (Bennet et al., 2007). Furthermore, a lesson plan can help the HoD to verify that all activities in line with policy and instructions are being carried out.

However, others have pointed out that lesson plan writing just adds more work on the HoDs of checking the plans, and therefore they dispute their importance. For example, Manaseh (2016) indicated that teachers' lesson plans do not guarantee completion of syllabi within the school year, nor do they guarantee effective teaching and learning. A similar study in South Africa revealed that HoDs face challenges in performing multiple tasks, which are time-consuming, and the functions included checking lesson plans (C. Smith et al., 2013).

The preceding disagreement is also evident in the findings of the present study. Three of the six HoDs carried out this management function and found it essential. Two HoDs pointed out that it just adds much work for the teachers who already have a lot to do. Another HoD indicated that teachers in their department do not write lesson plans.

#### 4.4.2.2.3 c) *Class observation*

Four of the six HoDs indicated monitoring the teaching and learning process by conducting classroom observations. They revealed that most of the time, the classroom observations are informal, and most of the time, they observe teachers' lessons when students have raised an issue concerning a particular teacher.

For example, Mr Brown had this to say:

I do spot checks to ensure that what the teacher planned is what is being taught in class. Usually, it is after I have been told there is an issue. So first, I talk with the teacher to hear his/her side of the story. If I need to intervene, I surprise the teacher by entering the classroom. After this, I talk with the teacher about the strengths and weaknesses and what can be done better. (Interview with Mr. Brown, 24/07/18).

The HoDs, who do class observation or spot checks, as they put it, also indicated that they allow teachers in their department to observe other's lessons. This, they said, helps to build trust between themselves and the teachers in the department. Furthermore, they indicated that this allows them to model good instructional practices to the teachers in the department. The HoDs also pointed out that some teachers request the HoDs to observe their lessons.

For instance, Mr Green made the following remark:

Classroom observation as a form of school-based supervision has not been as fervent as it should be. Sometimes teachers request that they should be supervised. Sometimes they request to observe my lesson, and I do allow them. If I am going to observe a lesson, I arrange with the teacher, and I have done that several times (Interview with Mr Green, 23/07/18).

Mr Gray indicated that he observes lessons at any time to confirm that what the teachers are indicating in the schemes and records of work is what is being done. The HoD also pointed out that the teachers sometimes request to be observed. The HoD further pointed out that he discusses with the teachers after observing them teach a lesson and highlighted the following:

After observing the lesson, I discuss the lesson with the teacher. We discuss the strengths. Teachers are very clever; they usually point out their strengths. So, I ask them to at least highlight their weakness. I then tell the teacher what I observed. Finally, I encourage the teachers to improve their weaknesses and maintain their strengths (Interview with Mr Gray, 24/07/18).

Two of the HoDs indicated that they do not conduct classroom observations. Mrs Pink from Diamond school had this to say:

I have never observed lessons. As an HoD, I am supposed to observe lessons, but the teachers do not welcome the idea. I think because they feel you will see they are not competent when the teachers themselves feel competent. (Mrs. Pink, 23/07/18).

This reveals that the attitude of teachers is a challenge when it comes to classroom observations. This finding is consistent with what Bambi (2012) found by interviewing teachers about class observations. Most teachers he interviewed assumed that they were knowledgeable and competent to carry out their classroom responsibilities, so there was no need for classroom observations. This agrees with what Mwangi (2011) highlighted about what teachers feel about their competency. Mwangi (2011, p. 15) pointed out that teachers consider themselves professionals and competent ones, for that matter. This suggests that HoDs need to be careful in executing direct instructional leadership roles, like class observation, in a way that will not appear to demean the work and competency the teachers believe they have.

Mr Tan from Gold school explained:

I do not conduct classroom observations. I will not tell you the truth if I say I do classroom observations. The subjects in my department are considered challenging. I, therefore, do not want to overburden

teachers by setting high standards. As a department, we try as much as possible to employ strategies that work for us (Interview with Mr Tan, 24/07/18).

This confirms what Leithwood (2016) points out some heads of departments are content to avoid exercising significant leadership in their department and schools (Leithwood, 2016). However, looking through the departmental meeting minutes, I noted that classroom observation was one of the agendas in the departmental minutes and that there is peer observation. It was also noted that the teachers in the department did peer observation and were required to report about the classroom observations during the departmental meetings.

For example, I came across the following minute:

Mrs Red observed the lesson delivered by Mrs Blue. The lesson was well planned, and it was successfully delivered.

The findings in this regard reveal that there is little or no formal arrangement by the HoDs to do classroom observations at the department level.

Mr Gray related the following:

There is no formal arrangement to supervise teachers in the department. Formal arrangements are only made when the division office tells us they are coming to advise the teachers on such a date. Teachers are told to plan their best in preparation for the coming of the method advisers from the division (interview with Mr Gray, 24/07/18).

The findings concur with what Hammond (1985) found in his study. Hammond conducted a study to investigate the influence that HoDs have on the quality of teaching and learning. He found out that there was little formal monitoring along the lines. Samuel (2013) also echoes the same in his study. He found that principals, regardless of their conviction on the importance of supervision, only engaged in unannounced class visits to develop and support teachers. This is consistent with the findings in this study. The study findings revealed that the HoDs monitored the quality of teaching and learning through informal observation opportunities.

The findings also confirm what Bolam and Turner (2003) found out in their study. Views about the monitoring of staff work were mixed. Other HoDs expressed frustration at having little time to observe members of the department teaching. Like in this study, a few HoDs mentioned observing their colleagues' lessons as a high priority if weaknesses are identified in a particular individual.

The findings in this study reveal differentiated approaches as far as monitoring teaching and learning is concerned. Other HoDs place value on monitoring teaching and learning through classroom observation while others do not. Ali and Botha (2006) accentuate that teaching and learning can improve extensively if HoDs spend more time supervising daily teaching and learning activities in their subject or learning area. Heck (1992b) stipulates that the number of time Heads of Schools spend observing classrooms and instruction is one of the essential elements in ensuring that teachers and students achieve the expected results. Other HoDs did not place value on monitoring teaching and learning through classroom observation should be an issue of concern.

#### *4.4.2.2.4 d) Checking syllabus coverage*

Another important aspect in monitoring teaching and learning that the HoDs indicated was checking syllabus coverage. The HoDs indicated that they encourage the members of their departments to cover the whole syllabus before the students sit for national examinations. The HoDs indicated that they follow up on syllabus coverage by checking the schemes and records of work. Knowing that sometimes the teacher can just fill in what has been covered without having covered the content, the HoDs indicated that they have some interviews with the students and ask them what they have learnt. Furthermore, the HoDs also indicated that they check the students' notebooks. If there is some disparity, the HoDs discuss it with the concerned teachers.

For example, Mr Brown from Diamond school remarked as follows:

I ask the teachers in my department to update me all the time about syllabus coverage. I also verify with the students if they have covered the content that the teachers tell me. Whenever I find discrepancies, I

sit down with the teacher and discuss what must be done. We do not have much of a problem as the teachers usually cover the syllabus in good time (Interview with Mr Brown, 24/07/18).

All the six HoDs indicated that the syllabus is fully covered by the time the students sit for national examinations. They pointed out that teachers are encouraged to organise classes outside the regular teaching hours to ensure they cover the syllabus on time.

The reviewed departmental minutes for all the six HoDs revealed that syllabus coverage was frequently discussed in departmental meetings. I noted through the same minutes that the teachers were required to indicate how much work they had covered and the time they anticipated finishing the syllabus. It was noted that syllabus coverage was a crucial issue emphasised by the HoDs in the meetings.

The HoDs in this study seemed to emphasise syllabus coverage which they explained was crucial in ensuring student performance. This is consistent with an observation made by Plewis (2011). Plewis (2011) observed that coverage of the syllabi in time is an essential variable in relation to student academic progress. He further pointed out that the more curricula for the subject are covered, the more significant the progress by students. Also echoing the same is Mwasoo (2011), who points out that syllabi coverage is a significant determinant regarding passing examinations, especially when syllabi are covered correctly.

The findings in this study reveal that HoDs mainly informally approach monitoring teaching and learning. This concurs with Jarvis (2008), who found out in a related study. Jarvis indicated that HoDs frequently used the word 'informal' when discussing their department work. Emphasis was placed on 'informal' discussion, 'informal' guidance, and 'informal' monitoring of practice. When prompted, the heads of the department were prepared to view this as a version of collegiality, but, again, the word did little more than legitimise a situation in which their leadership was severely circumscribed (Jarvis, 2008, p. 27).

According to the conceptual framework in the current study, it is anticipated that the practice of the discussed IL functions by HoDs can result in improved student performance. Evidence from the findings reveals that some of the HoDs do not execute some IL functions, and others do execute informally. Considering the conceptual framework, it can be deduced that the HoDs do not reap the full benefits of the instructional leadership functions discussed.

#### *4.3.3.2 Monitoring student performance*

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) assert that an effective instructional leader uses different tools to achieve the school's goals through continuous supervision of students' progress. This may involve checking the student's workbooks and analysing assessments done in class. Giving frequent feedback on students' progress and accountability demands the teachers; assisting the instructional leader to work towards realising the school's goals is essential (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Teachers use the assessment activities to analyse students' progress in their learning. The HoDs indicated that they monitor student performance in several ways discussed in the following section.

#### *4.4.2.2.5 a) Checking continuous termly and yearly assessments*

All HoDs indicated that they monitor student progress by checking continuous assessments. For example, Mr Green had this to say about monitoring student progress:

There are mark books in which teachers fill CATs results. I look at these occasionally to appreciate how students are performing. As a school, we also have a scholastic file manned by the senior teacher. The file contains scholastic records of each student from form one through form four. Teachers are required to fill in CATs results whenever they administer tests. If I want to monitor, I just get the file from the senior teacher and look at what teachers have filled.  
(Interview with Mr. Green, 23/07/18).

Mrs Pink from the same school indicated a different approach to monitoring student performance. She explained:

I check if teachers are administering CATs. Every teacher is required to administer at least two CATs in a term. I check the results to see how the students are doing in the different subjects (Interview with Mrs Pink, 23/07/18).

The HoDs also indicated that apart from continuous assessment test results, they also use the end of term, end of the year and national examinations to check students' performance. For example, Mr Tan commented that:

As a department, we have our way of looking at student performance. Usually, the administration prepares the results at the end of each term and whenever national examination results are out. Nevertheless, as a department, we must look at our performance at the end of the term or an academic year. We try to look at possible challenges and their solutions so that we improve and improve each year. (Interview with Mr. Tan, 24/07/18).

Mr Black indicated that besides checking the results of CATs, he also personally checks students' notebooks to monitor student performance. The following verbatim quote refers:

The subjects in my department require frequent exercise. Some teachers refrain from marking by not giving the students more minor exercises. I, therefore, check students' notebooks to see if teachers are doing what is recommended for their subject (interview with Mr Black, 25/07/18).

The HoDs also indicated that they have departmental meetings where they analyse mid-term, end of term, end of the year results and national examinations. Each teacher is supposed to explain the performance of students in their subjects. The teachers are supposed to give reasons for the performance of the students. If there are challenges, the teachers should explain their plan to improve the performance.

Mr Gray provided the following verbatim evidence:

We have a departmental meeting once a term. One of the agendas is to look at student performance/progress. Usually, teachers point out why their students have performed the way they have. At this point, it is not



just the department's work; other teachers also comment on the performance based on the results. (Interview with Mr. Gray, 24/07/18).

From the reviewed minutes, it was noted that the HoDs discuss student performance subject by subject. Every teacher explains the performance and points out what he/she plans to do to improve or keep up the performance.

The findings in this current study align with what Rajoo (2012) found in a similar study. Rajoo (2012) found out that monitoring student progress through students' workbooks, analysing tasks, and termly or yearly results was one of the characteristics of IL necessary for HoDs to influence classroom practice and positively influence student performance. Again, this finding is consistent with what Bolam and Turner found in their study. Nearly all HoDs in Bolam and Turner's (2003) study indicated that monitoring students' work was a vital management method, although they used varied ways of monitoring. Like in the present study, some HoDs adopted a more formal approach, looking at samples of student's work for each department member annually.

#### *4.4.2.2.6 b) Frequent continuous assessment*

The HoDs indicated that their schools place more emphasis on frequent testing. For example, Mr Tan:

We can give the students as many tests as we want. These could be weekly, fortnight or end-of-topic tests. We do not just rely on mid-term, end of term, or end of year examinations. We ensure that the tests the students are given are up to standard, especially the mid-term and end of term or end of year examinations (Interview with Mr Tan, 24/07/18).

Analysis of the data revealed that much emphasis is placed on frequent, continuous testing. This seems to have a bearing on the performance of the departments and the school. This confirms what Hallinger, and Wang (2015) point out instructionally effective schools emphasise testing.

#### 4.4.2.2.7 c) *Student liaison to check teacher performance*

All the HoDs indicated that they liaise with the students on how teaching is going on in the classes. They pointed out that students also raise concerns for a particular teacher. For example, HoD from Gold school, Mr Tan, stressed that:

Students are free to raise their concerns about their teachers to me as HoD. If a teacher is not teaching them well, they do come. I do that if I need to follow up on the issue with the subject teacher. (Interview with Mr. Tan, 24/07/18).

Similarly, Mr Green had this to say:

Students come to me whenever they have problems with their teachers. Talking with them helps me picture how they are doing in the various subjects they are taking (Interview with Mr Green, 23/07/18).

Mr Black emphasised that:

We give the students a chance to raise their concerns through their form teachers. So, if the form teacher fails to resolve the issue, he/she is required to consult me as the HoD. I discuss the issue with the teacher in question until a solution is found. If I fail to handle the issue, the administration takes it up (Interview with Mr. Black, 25/07/18).

The analysis shows that monitoring student progress was being made in both schools through frequent continuous assessments, checking and analysing grades for mid-term, end of term examinations and national examinations and liaising with the students on teacher performance.

Robinson et al. (2008) reported that monitoring students' progress was examined with associated effect sizes for impact on performance and the effect size was 0.07, which was interpreted as significant. In a similar study, Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, & Brown (2014) found out that monitoring students' progress was associated with high levels of academic performance.

The study findings regarding the management of instructional program reveal different strategies that HoDs employ to manage the instructional program. Most of the functions discussed are geared towards improving teacher practices that

resultantly lead to improved students' performance. This finding is consistent with what Malloy (2017) found in a similar study. Malloy (2017) found that managing teaching and learning were central to the work of the HoDs.

Robinson et al. (2008) also reported that leaders in schools where students performed above expected levels were more likely to be engaged with their staff in curriculum planning, visiting classrooms, and reviewing evidence about student learning. The schools in which the study was done are among the high-performing schools in the division. The HoDs seem to place different values on the different IL practices, mainly focused on managing the instructional program. Other HoDs seem to have a formal way of doing this whilst others do it informally. It can therefore be argued that the exceptional performance in these two schools is not necessarily because of the engagement of the HoDs in the management of the instructional program.

#### ***4.4.3 HoDs Perceived contribution of their IL practices to students' performance***

Knowing that myriad factors influence students' performance, HoDs were asked to express what they perceived as the effect of IL practices on students' performance in the fourth research question. In the interviews, HoDs were asked to respond to the question, "What do you think is the effect of your IL practices specifically in managing the instructional program on students' performance?" The findings revealed that all the six HoDs perceived an effect of the IL practices on students' performance. For example, Mr Black remarked that:

Yes, I believe there is a 100% relationship between my instructional leadership practices and student performance. Sometimes students report issues that they have through their form teachers. If I do not handle the issues well, it can affect teacher performance and the students' performance in continuous assessments and national examinations. Secondly, as an instructional leader, I do follow-ups with the teachers. The follow-ups reveal areas which are being done well and areas which need improvement. (Interview with Mr. Black, 25/07/18).

Mr. Brown stated that:

There is a link between my role as an instructional leader in the department and how students perform. If I do not do my work

correctly, it will affect students' performance. If I work hard as HoD, the teachers will also work hard, and the students will do well.

(Interview with Mr. Brown, 24/07/18).

The HoDs also indicated that their IL role, specifically in the class allocation, has a marked effect on student performance in a particular subject. They indicated that when allocating classes, they look at the performance and competency of the teacher. They say this is measured by how well the students perform, mainly in end of term examinations and the national examination. For example, Mrs Pink indicated the following:

I am responsible for allocating teachers in different classes. The students will not fare well if I do not allocate competent teachers, especially in the exam classes. I, therefore, look at the examination results to determine teacher competency. Students also rate their teachers and do complain when a teacher is not teaching them well. They do come. As HoD, I must consider the teachers' performance when allocating teachers so as can be seen that what I do as HoD can affect students' performance in various subjects (Interview with Mrs Pink, 23/07/18).

A review of the MSCE results indicated that students' performance for the past three years has been outstanding. In this case, outstanding refers to a pass rate of more than 95%. In both schools, the pass rate of students in all the subjects ranged between 95 and 100%. The pass rates seem to confirm the perception of the teachers. However, it is essential to note that this study aimed to study a cause-effect relationship between the two variables. Other factors could also explain the outstanding performance.

This was echoed by the HoD from Gold school, Mr Gray, who pointed out that apart from the instructional practices of the HoDs, school culture also influences students' performance. The HoD indicated that leadership could change, but the school culture remains the same. Hence the performance continues to improve and to be outstanding. Mr Gray had this to say:

Since the time I came to this, I have seen leadership changing. We have changed head teachers three times now. I have also seen HoDs

changing. Though this is the case, the performance has not been affected negatively (Interview with Mr Gray, 24/07/18).

There are several factors at play that influence student performance. However, the contribution of IL plays a crucial role in improving student performance. Discussing the role of IL on student performance, Robinson et al. (2008) found out that IL affects student performance as measured by the learning outcomes. The findings in Robinsons' study (2008) suggest that the more the leaders in the school focus all that they do on the school's primary business, which is teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student performance. To some extent, the HoDs in this study seem to agree with this literature because they all perceived that their IL practices affect students' performance. However, given the response by one of the HoDs, it is essential to acknowledge that the IL practices of the HoD alone cannot result in the excellent performance of the students. Other factors, like school culture, which the HoD indicated, could contribute too.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

In this chapter, the study's findings have been discussed in relation to the study's conceptual framework and other research findings. Central to the findings was that the HoDs do carry out some leadership dimensions of instructional leadership. Remarkably, the HoDs are involved in managing the instructional program. There were differentiated approaches to the management of instructional program among HoDs of the same school and between the two schools involved in this study. Notwithstanding this, the HoDs agreed that their IL practices positively affect student performance. Besides this, the HoDs pointed out other factors, like school culture, which they say also affects students' performance. The next chapter discusses conclusions derived from the study and their implications.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

#### **5.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter draws conclusions based on the study findings and discussion articulated in the previous chapter. The conclusions are discussed according to the main themes used in discussing the findings in the previous chapter. The implications of the study findings are discussed in line with each conclusion made. Then an overall conclusion is presented. Lastly, the chapter summary is provided.

#### **5.2 Conclusions and implications**

Considering the findings in this study, several conclusions have been drawn regarding the IL role of heads of departments, particularly in managing instructional program and what the HoDs perceive as the effect of the same on student performance.

##### ***5.2.1 HoDs' understanding of instructional leadership and their instructional leadership role***

The HoDs did not know the term 'instructional leadership'. Generally, they were unfamiliar with the concept of instructional leadership. HoDs' understanding of instructional leadership role revealed that they mainly spearheaded teacher supervision to improve student performance. It was evident from the findings that defining and communicating goals and creating a positive learning environment did not form part of their roles. This implies that the HoDs do not practice instructional leadership in its entirety.

It can be concluded that the instructional leadership role of the HoDs was grounded in their position as HODs and not in their understanding of instructional leadership and their skills as instructional leaders.

### **5.2.2 *HoDs specific practices of instructional leadership***

Notwithstanding the HoDs' lack of understanding of instructional leadership, the study revealed that the HoDs are cognisant of the roles they are supposed to carry out as stipulated in the handbook. Some of the roles are consistent with the functions of instructional leadership. It can be concluded that understanding the concept of IL is not the only building block of IL practices. As seen from the findings in this study, setting up a policy, like having the secondary school handbook, also influences IL practices. The implication is that there is a need for the HoDs to have a background understanding of the roles highlighted in the secondary school handbook, which points to IL.

### **5.2.3 *Management of instructional program***

The study upheld that the management of the instructional program is central to the work of HoDs. Under this broad function, there is the coordination of curriculum, monitoring of teaching and learning, and monitoring student progress. Several strategies were used in carrying out these functions. However, there were other functions that HoDs knew were required to perform but did not perform due to some challenges. The functions included checking lesson plans and conducting class observations. This implies that the management of the instructional programme is not as comprehensive as it is supposed to be. It was further concluded that different functions pertaining to the management of instructional program are performed differently among HoDs of the same school and between the two schools. HoDs applied strategies that they felt worked for their departments. This could be attributed to a lack of standardised and formal training for the HoDs once they assume the position. This implies how the teachers conduct themselves in different departments and consequently on students' performance in different subjects.

### **5.2.4 *HoDs perceived contribution of their IL practices to students' performance***

From the study findings, it was concluded that HoDs perceive that their IL role within the department has a bearing on students' performance. This perception is supported by the outstanding performance of the two schools. However, it is essential to point out that IL practices alone are not the only thing influencing the outstanding

performance in the two schools. School culture was pointed out by one of the HoDs as a factor influencing outstanding performance.

### **5.3 Overall conclusion**

Overall, it can be concluded that instructional leadership is a new term/concept in Malawi's education system. HoDs are unfamiliar with the term. However, the practice of instructional leadership is not constrained by this. The evidence is that, notwithstanding their unfamiliarity with the term, they practiced some roles consistent with instructional leadership. Different factors shape how the HoDs practice instructional leadership within the same school and in schools that share similar environments. Therefore, instructional leadership practices among HoDs will vary from one HoD to the other. From the HoDs perspective, instructional leadership practices contribute to students' performance.

### **5.4 Areas for further research**

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn in this study, suggestions for further research are made.

First, research is required to find the extent to which HoDs practice IL, specifically in managing the instructional program. Much as the study has found that HoDs practice some functions of instructional leadership, the qualitative study could not quantify the extent to which the HoDs do this. To that effect, there is a need for a quantitative study to quantify the extent of the practice. In addition, the quantitative design can also attempt to assess the strength of the link between IL practices and students' performance.

Secondly, future research would be required to investigate teacher perceptions of the role of HoDs as instructional leaders in managing the instructional program. The researchers could examine if the role of the HoD as an instructional leader is necessary for the secondary school department. In addition, the researchers would also investigate if the HoDs practices support teachers and help them improve their instructional practices and student performance.



## **5.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has provided the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further studies. It has been concluded that HoDs practice instructional leadership to some extent regardless of their unfamiliarity with the concept. In addition, how the HoDs practice IL is very varied even among HoDs of the same school. This implies that there is no standard way to execute the different aspects of instructional leadership. Further studies have been recommended to address issues that emanated from this study.

## REFERENCES

- Alam, A., & Ahmad, M. (2017). The impact of instructional leadership, professional communities and extra responsibilities for teachers on student achievement. *International Journal of Educational Management*, (31)3, 383 – 396.
- Ali, A. F., & Botha, N. (2006). The role, importance, and effectiveness of Heads of department in contributing to school improvement in public secondary schools in Gauteng. A research report for the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance. Johannesburg: MGSLG.
- Alig-Mielcarek, J. M. (2003). *A model of school success: Instructional leadership, academic press, and student achievement*. Ohio: The Ohio State University.
- Alig-Mielcarek, J., & Hoy, W. K. (2005). *Instructional leadership*. Information Age Publishers: Greenwich, CT, USA.
- Bambi, A. (2013). *The role of head of departments as instructional leaders in secondary schools: implications for teaching and learning*. Johannesburg: (Master thesis). University of Johannesburg (South Africa).
- Barth, R. S. (1986). On sheep and goats and school reform. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 68(4), 293-296.
- Bendikson, L., Robinson, V., & Hattie, J. (2012). Principal instructional leadership and secondary school performance. *SET: Research information for teachers*, (1), 2-8.
- Bennett, N., Woods, P., Wise, C., & Newton, W. (2007). Understandings of middle leadership in secondary schools: A review of empirical research. *School Leadership and Management*, 27(5), 453-470.
- Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative research for the social sciences (4th ed.)*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Bhengu, T. T., & Mkhize, B. N. (2013). Principals' instructional leadership practices in improving learner achievement: Case studies of five secondary schools in the Umbumbulu area. *Education as Change*, 17(sup1), S33–S47.
- Blase, J., & Blase, J. (1999a). Principals' instructional leadership and teacher development: Teachers' perspectives. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(3), 349–378.
- Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2002). Teachers' perceptions of principals' instructional leadership and implications. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 1(3), 256–264.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative Research in Education. An Introduction to Theory and Methods. Third Edition*. Allyn & Bacon, A Viacom Company, 160 Gould St.
- Bolam, R., & Turner, C. (2003). Heads of secondary school subject departments and the improvement of teaching and learning. In M. Wallace, & L. Poulson (Eds.), *Learning to read critically in educational leadership and management* (pp. 133-148). SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446216576.n6>
- Bossert, S. T., Dwyer, D. C., Rowan, B., & Lee, G. V. (1982). The Instructional Management Role of the Principal. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 18(3), 34–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X82018003004>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328–352.
- Bruggencate, G., Luyten, H., Scheerens, J., & Slegers, P. (2012). Modeling the Influence of School Leaders on Student Achievement How Can School

Leaders Make a Difference? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48, 699–732. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X11436272>

Bush, T. (2008). Leadership and management development in education. *Leadership and Management Development in Education*, 1–184. SAGE Publications.

Bush, T. (2003). *Theories of educational leadership and management*. SAGE Publications.

Bush, T. and Glover, D. (2003) School Leadership: Concepts and Evidence. A Review of Literature Carried out for National College for School Leadership. National College for School Leadership, Nottingham.

Bush, T., Joubert, R., Kiggundu, E., & Van Rooyen, J. (2010). Managing teaching and learning in South African schools. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 30(2), 162–168.

Carraway, J. H., & Young, T. (2015). Implementation of a district wide policy to improve principals' instructional leadership: Principals' sense-making of the skillful observation and coaching laboratory. *Educational Policy*, 29(1), 230–256.

Cavan, S. (1977). Review of JD Douglas's (1976) Investigative social review: individual and team field research'. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 83(3), 809–811.

Clarke, K. A. (2009). Secondary school department heads as teacher leaders: A study in suburban Ontario. [Master's thesis: Brock University St. Catharines, Ontario.]

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (Sixth Edition). Abingdon: Routledge.

- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches (3rd ed.)*. SAGE publications. Inc.
- Day, C., Gu, Q., & Sammons, P. (2016). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: How successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(2), 221-258.
- Dean, J. (2002). *Implementing performance management. A handbook for schools*. Routledge Falmer.
- Dhuey, E., & Smith, J. (2014). How important are school principals in the production of student achievement? *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue canadienne d'économique*, 47(2), 634-663.
- Dimmock, C., & Tan, C. Y. (2016). Reconceptualising Learning-Centred (Instructional) Leadership: An obsolete concept in need of renovation. *Leading and Managing*, 22(2), 1–17.
- Dinham, S. (2007). The secondary Head of Department and the achievement of exceptional student outcomes. *Journal of Education Administration*, 45(1), 62–79. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230710722458>
- Dwyer, D. C. (1985). Understanding the principal's contribution to instruction. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 63(1), 3–18.
- Finlay, Linda and Ballinger, Claire (eds.) (2006). *Qualitative research for allied health professionals: challenging choices*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Fischer, T., Dietz, J., & Antonakis, J. (2017). Leadership process models: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Management*, 43(6), 1726-1753.

- Gamage, D., Adams, D., & McCormack, A. (2009). How Does a School Leader's Role Influence Student Achievements? A Review of Research Findings and Best Practices. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 4(1).
- Ghavifekr, S., Ibrahim, M. S., Chellapan, K., Sukumaran, K., & Subramaniam, A. (2017). Instructional leadership practices of principal in vocational and technical colleges: Teachers' perception. *MOJEM: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management*, 3(1), 48–67.
- Given, L. M. (Ed.). (2008). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. California: SAGE publications.
- Glickman, C. D., Gordon, S. P., & Ross-Gordon, J. M. (2001). *Supervision and instructional leadership: A developmental approach*. Needham Heights, MA Allyn & Bacon/Longman Publishing, a Pearson Education Company. Web site: <http://www.abacon.com>.
- Goldring, E. B., & Pasternack, R. (1994). Principals' coordinating strategies and school effectiveness. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 5(3), 239–253.
- Greaney, A.-M., Sheehy, A., Heffernan, C., Murphy, J., Mhaolrúnaigh, S. N., Heffernan, E., & Brown, G. (2012). Research ethics application: A guide for the novice researcher. *British Journal of Nursing*, 21(1), 38–43.
- Greb, W. (2011). *Principal leadership and student achievement: What is the effect of transformational leadership in conjunction with instructional leadership on student achievement?* (PhD thesis). Marian University: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Guthrie, J. W., & Schuermann, P. J. (2010). *Successful school leadership: Planning, politics, performance, and power*. Allyn & Bacon.

- Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(3), 329–352.
- Hallinger, P. (2005). Instructional leadership and the school principal: A passing fancy that refuses to fade away. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 4(3), 221–239.
- Hallinger, P. (2008). Methodologies for studying school leadership: A review of 25 years of research using the principal instructional management rating scale. Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, 48.
- Hallinger, P. (2015). Conceptual Framework. In: *Assessing Instructional Leadership with the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale*. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15533-3\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15533-3_2)
- Hallinger, P., Adams, D., Harris, A., & Suzette Jones, M. (2018). Review of conceptual models and methodologies in research on principal instructional leadership in Malaysia: A case of knowledge construction in a developing society. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 56(1), 104–126.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness: 1980-1995. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 9(2), 157–191.
- Hallinger, P., Gümüş, S., & Bellibas, M. S. (2020). 'Are principals instructional leaders yet? 'A science map of the knowledge base on instructional leadership, 1940–2018. *Scientometrics*, 122(3), 1629–1650.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2010). Leadership for learning: Does collaborative leadership make a difference in school improvement? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 38(6), 654–678.

- Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1985). Assessing the instructional management behavior of principals. *The Elementary School Journal*, 86(2), 217–247.
- Harris, A., Jones, M., Cheah, K.S.L., Devadason, E. and Adams, D. (2017). Exploring principals' instructional leadership practices in Malaysia: insights and implications. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 55(2), 207-221. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-05-2016-0051>
- Heaven, G., & Bourne, P. A. (2016). Instructional leadership and its effect on students' academic performance. *Review Public Administration and Management*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.4172/2315-7844.1000197>
- Heck, R. H. (1992a). Principals' instructional leadership and school performance: Implications for policy development. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 14(1), 21–34.
- Heck, R. H., & Hallinger, P. (2014). Modeling the longitudinal effects of school leadership on teaching and learning. *Journal of Education Administration*, 52, 653–681.
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2011). *Participant recruitment: Qualitative research methods*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Jaca, N. I. (2013). The leadership role of the Head of Department in the teaching of Mathematics (Doctoral dissertation). University of Pretoria.
- Jarvis, A. (2008). Leadership lost: A case study in three selective secondary schools. *Management in Education*, 22(1), 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020607085627>



- Jita, L. C. (2010). Instructional leadership for the improvement of science and mathematics in South Africa. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 851-854.
- Jupp, V. (2006). *The Sage dictionary of social research methods*. California: SAGE.
- Kivunja, C. (2018). Distinguishing between Theory, Theoretical Framework, and Conceptual Framework: A Systematic Review of Lessons from the Field. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 7(6), 44. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v7n6p44>
- Krug, S. E. (1992). Instructional Leadership: A Constructivist Perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 28(3), 430–443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X92028003012>
- Kruger, A. G. (2003). Instructional leadership: The impact on the culture of teaching and learning in two effective secondary schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 23(3), 206–211.
- Kuckartz, U. (2014). *Qualitative text analysis: A guide to methods, practice and using software*. SAGE Publications.
- Laska, J. A. (1984). The relationship between instruction and curriculum: A conceptual clarification. *Instructional Science*, 13(3), 203–212.
- Lee, M., Walker, A., & Chiu, Y. L. (2012). Contrasting effects of instructional leadership practices on student learning in a high accountability context. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 50(5), 586–611. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231211249835>
- Leithwood, K. (2016). Department-head leadership for school improvement. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 15(2), 117–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2015.1044538>

- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2(163–194), 105.
- Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990). *A theory of goal setting & task performance*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey. *American Psychologist*, 57(9), 705–717. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.57.9.705>
- Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2006). New directions in goal-setting theory. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 15(5), 265–268.
- Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2013). Goal setting theory: In Locke, E. A., and Latham, G. P., (Eds) *The current state. New developments in goal setting and task performance* (pp. 623–630). New York : Routledge/Taylor Francis group.
- Louis, K. S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., Anderson, S. E., Michlin, M., & Mascall, B. (2010). Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning (Vol. 42). Wallace Foundation.
- Machoya, M. S., Mugwe, M., & Masau, N. M. (2014). An investigation into the relationship between instructional leadership and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools of Murang'a County—Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 2(9).
- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., Macqueen, K., M., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods: A data collector's field guide*. Family Health International.
- Majid, M. A. A., Othman, M., Mohamad, S. F., Lim, S. A. H., & Yusof, A. (2017). Piloting for interviews in qualitative research: Operationalization and lessons

learnt. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(4), 1073–1080.

Malloy, N. C. (2017). The heads of department's instructional leadership role in mathematics teaching and learning in three South African secondary schools in Pinetown District (Doctoral Dissertation). <http://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/15427>

Manaseh, A. M. (2016). Instructional leadership: The role of heads of schools in managing the instructional programme. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 4(1), 30-47. Doi: 10.17583/ijelm.2016.1691.

Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2001). *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results*. ASCD.

Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., and McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Mathunyane, S. S. (2015). Instructional leadership: Exploration of instructional behaviours of two secondary school principals in Limpopo Province. (Doctoral Dissertation). <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/17704>.

Mayers, R. S., & Zepeda, S. J. (2002). High school department chairs: Role ambiguity and conflict during change. *Nassp Bulletin*, 86(632), 49–64.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education: Revised and expanded from 'case study research in education' (2nd ed.)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mestry, R., & Pillay, J. (2013). School instructional leadership. *Education As Change*, 17(sup1), S1-S3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16823206.2014.865974>

- MoEST. (2001). Malawi Education Sector: Policy & Investment Framework (PIF) Revised. Lilongwe.
- MoEST. (2020). *National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP) 2020—2030*. Lilongwe.
- MoEST. (2014). Education Sector Implementation Plan II (2013/14- 2017/18). Towards Quality: Empowering the school. Lilongwe.
- MoEST. (2014). Secondary school handbook. Lilongwe.
- Mwangi, R. M. (2011). Impact of school leadership on academic achievement in Kenyan secondary schools. (Doctoral thesis). Weather head: Case Western Reserve.
- Mwasoo, D. (2011). Does syllabi coverage enable students to pass exams? Nairobi: Nairobi University Press.
- Neumerski, C., M. (2012). Rethinking instructional leadership, A Review: What Do We Know About Principal, Teacher, and Coach Instructional Leadership, and Where Should We Go from Here? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 2(49), 310–347. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X12456700>
- Ng, F. S. D., Nguyen, T. D., Wong, K. S. B., & Choy, K. W. W. (2015). Instructional leadership practices in Singapore. *School Leadership & Management*, 35(4), 388–407. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2015.1010501>
- Northouse, P. G. (2018). Leadership: Theory and practice. (8th ed). SAGE Publications.
- O'Donnell, R. J., & White, G. P. (2005). Within the accountability era: Principals' instructional leadership behaviors and student achievement. *NASSP Bulletin*, 89(645), 56–71.

- Ogawa, R. T., & Bossert, S. T. (1995). Leadership as an organizational quality. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 31(2), 224–243.
- Ogina, T. A. (2017). How heads of departments understand their roles as instructional leaders: A South African study. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 18(1–3), 224–230.
- Pan, H.-L. W., Nyeu, F.-Y., & Chen, J. S. (2015). Principal instructional leadership in Taiwan: Lessons from two decades of research. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 53(4), 492–511. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-01-2014-0006>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work*, 1(3), 261–283.
- Paranosic, N., & Riveros, A. (2017). The metaphorical department head: Using metaphors as analytic tools to investigate the role of department head. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 20(4), 432–450.
- Plewis, I. (2011). Curriculum coverage and classroom grouping as explanation of teacher differences in students' mathematics progress. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 4(2), 97–107.
- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2010). *Essentials of nursing research: Appraising evidence for nursing practice* (7th ed). Wolters Kluwer Health/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Quah, C. S. (2011). Instructional leadership among principals of secondary schools in Malaysia.2(12). *International Research Journals*, 2(12), 1784–1800.
- Rajoo, T. (2012). An investigation into the role of the Head of Department (HOD) as an instructional leader in the leadership and management of the teaching & learning of accounting in two secondary schools in one district in Gauteng (Doctoral Dissertation). University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

- Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (eds.) (2003). *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Robinson, V. M. J. (2001). Embedding leadership in task performance. *Leadership for Quality Schooling* (pp. 90–102). Routledge/Falmer.
- Robinson, V. M., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2007). School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why. Ministry of Education, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Robinson, V., Lloyd, C., & Rowe, K. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635–674.
- Reigeluth, C. M., & Carr-Chellman, A. A. (Eds). (2009). *Instructional-Design Theories and Models, Volume III: Building a Common Knowledge Base*. New York/ London: Taylor and Francis.
- Salter, C., Green, M., Duncan, P., Berre, A., & Torti, C. (2010). Virtual communication, transformational leadership, and implicit leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 4(2), 6–17.
- Sengai, W. (2021). Heads of Department's role in implementation of History syllabi at selected Zimbabwean secondary schools: an instructional leadership perspective. *Yesterday and Today*, (25), 1-30.
- Shatzer, R. H., Caldarella, P., Hallam, P. R., & Brown, B. L. (2014). Comparing the effects of instructional and transformational leadership on student achievement: Implications for practice. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 42(4), 445–459. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213502192>

- Shoma, V. G., Daud, K., & Subramaniam, S. (2016). Reality on instructional leadership and commitment of teachers: A preliminary study. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, (3) 123-127.
- Siskin, L. S. (1991). Departments as different worlds: Subject subcultures in secondary schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 27(2), 134–160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X91027002003>
- Siskin, L. S. (1994). *Realms of knowledge: Academic departments in secondary schools*. Falmer Press.
- Smaldino, S. E., Lowther, D. L., & Russell, J. D. (2008). *Instructional technology and media for learning (9th ed.)*. New Jersey: Pearson Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Smith, C., Mestry, R., & Bambie, A. (2013). Role-players' experiences and perceptions of heads of departments' instructional leadership role in secondary schools. *Education as Change*, 17(1), 163–176. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1080/16823206.2014.866001>
- Smith, W. F., & Andrews, R. L. (1989). *Instructional leadership: How principals make a difference*. Publications, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 125 N. West Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 (Stock No. 611-89142; \$14.95).
- Spillane, J. P. (2005). Distributed leadership. *The Educational Forum*, 69(2), 143-150).
- Spillane, J. P. (2012). *Distributed leadership* (Vol. 4). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Spillane, J. P., & Diamond, J. B. (Eds.). (2007). *Distributed leadership in practice*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

- Spillane, J., Diamond, J. B., & Jita, L. (2003). Leading instruction: The distribution of leadership for instruction. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 35(5), 533–543.
- Spillane, J., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2004). Towards a theory of leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 36(1), 3–34.
- Swanson, R. A., & Chermack, T. J. (2013). *Theory Building in Applied Disciplines*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Toprakci, E., Beytekin, O. F., & Chipala, H. C. (2016). A Case Study of Instructional Leadership in Malawian Secondary Schools. *Journal of Faculty of Education*, 17(3), 169–176. <https://doi.org/10.17679/inuefd.17314606>
- UNDP. (2015). *Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)*. <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>
- UNESCO. (2015). EFA Global monitoring report 2015. Education for All 2000-2015: Achievement and challenges. UNESCO.
- UNESCO, & MoEST. (2008). The Development of Education; National report for Malawi. Lilongwe.
- Valentine, J. W., & Prater, M. (2011). Instructional, transformational, and managerial leadership and student achievement: High school principals make a difference. *NASSP Bulletin*, 95(1), 5-30.
- Van de Grift, W., & Houtveen, A. A. M. (1999). Leadership and pupil achievement in primary education. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 10(4), 373–339.



- Van Deventer, I. (2003). *An educator's guide to school management skills*. Van Schaik Publishers.
- Wallin, D., Newton, P., Jutras, M., & Adilman, J. (2019). "I'm Not Where I Want to Be": Teaching Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices. *The Rural Educator*, 40(2), 23–32.
- Weber, J. R. (1989). Leading the Instructional Program. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED309513>
- Weller Jr, L. D. (2001). Department heads: The most underutilized leadership position. *NASSP Bulletin*, 85(625), 73–81.
- Weller, L. D. (2002). *Quality middle school leadership: Eleven central skill areas*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press.
- Wettersten, J. A. (1992). Leadership Strategies of Exemplary High School Department Chairs: Four Case Studies of Successful "Middle Managers." *ERIC Digest*.
- Witziers, B., Bosker, R. J., & Krüger, M. L. (2003). Educational Leadership and Student Achievement: The Elusive Search for an Association. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 398–425. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X03253411>
- Yin, R. K. (2003). Designing case studies. *Qualitative Research Methods*, 5(14), 359–386.
- Zepeda, S. J., & Kruskamp, B. (2007). High school department chairs—Perspectives on instructional supervision. *The High School Journal*, 90(4), 44–54.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Introductory letter from the School of Education

#### UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



#### CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

Principal: Richard Tambulasi,  
B.A. (Pub Admin), BPA (Hon), MPA, Ph.D

Our Ref.: EDF/6/19  
Your Ref.:

10<sup>th</sup> July 2018

P. O. Box 280, Zomba, MALAWI  
Tel: (265) 01 524 222  
Telex: 44742 CHANCOL MI  
Fax: (265) 01 524 046

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

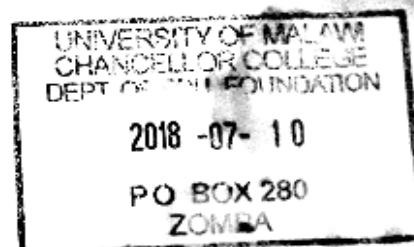
#### INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR MASTER OF EDUCATION (POLICY PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP)

Ms. Ellen Ndeule Mzazalale (**MED/PPL/07/14**) is a student of Education in the Department of Education Foundations at Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

She is working on her thesis, "**Instructional Leadership Practices of Heads of Departments; Implications on Students Learning Outcomes.**" This is meant to be a request to your institution or organization to assist our student in her endeavor to collect data.

Thank you

E.T. KAMCHEDZERA, PhD  
POSTGRADUATE COORDINATOR-EDUCATION FOUNDATIONS  
DEPARTMENT



Scanned by CamScanner

## **Appendix 2: Participant information sheet**

I am Mrs. Ellen Mazalale of the Chancellor College, Zomba. I am a Master of Education Student researcher at the Chancellor College of the University of Malawi. This study aims at exploring IL practices of heads of departments particularly in managing instructional program and the perceived contribution to students' performance. The study will be conducted in 2 schools in the Southeast Education Division and your school is one of the sampled schools. Results from the study will help understand practice of IL by HoDs and the perceived contribution of the same to students' performance as measured by student learning outcomes.

I will conduct an interview which will be audio recorded to gather the required data for the study.

After the interview, I will request that you provide me with the following documents that may help me to check the linkages between IL and student's performance:

- a. Minutes for departmental meetings
- b. Students' performance reports such as examination reports
- c. And any other document that you may deem necessary for further understanding of either students' performance or HoD's IL practices.

### Piloting

The tool has been piloted first before being used to collect the data.

### Agreeing to take part in this research

I do not anticipate that any harm will come to respondents through their participation in the research. Please note that your participation in the research is entirely voluntary.

### Confidentiality

As a participant in the research, you can expect that all the information you provide will be treated in confidence. Thus, your name will not be used when writing reports about the research. It also means that no one will know how you as an individual answered the questions. No quotations or other results arising from your participation in this study will be included in any reports, even anonymously, without your agreement.

### **Appendix 3: Consent form**

I have read and understood the study information sheet and I understand what will be required of me. I understand the study objective and the reason for data collection exercise. I understand that these discussions will be audio recorded or written on a piece of paper. I understand that the records will be kept for some time before being destroyed. I understand that the information I will give will be treated in the strictest confidence. My questions concerning this study have been answered. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

**Participant's signature:** .....

**Date:**                    \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_\_\_

#### **Appendix 4: Semi-Structured KII guide for Heads of Departments**

##### **Introductory statement**

My name is Ellen Mazalale. I am conducting a study aimed at exploring the HoDs' IL practices and how practice of the same affects student performance.

This tool has three sections. The first section contains general questions such as age and duration of services. The second section is a checklist of your instructional leadership practices. You will be required to tick in the boxes in which there are numbers one up to five. The numbers symbolize the degree to which you practice the different instructional leadership functions.

The third section will be an interview (in the form of a discussion) on your practices as a HoD and whether this affects student performance as measured by students' learning outcomes.

After the interview, I will request that you provide me with the following documents that may help me to check for elements of instructional leadership.

- a. Department meeting minutes
- b. Written teacher and students' evaluation reports
- c. Examination results reports
- d. And any other document that you may deem necessary for further understanding of HoD's IL practices

## Questions

### Section 0: General Questions

Q0.00. Date of interview: | \_ \_ / \_ \_ \_ / \_ \_ \_ \_ | [[D D / M M / Y Y Y Y]]

Q0.01. Department which the HoD leads

|               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Humanities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Science    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Language   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Section 1: Respondent's Profile

Q1.01. Gender

|           |                          |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| 1. Female | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Male   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q1.02. What is your highest academic qualification?

|                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Diploma           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Bachelor's Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Master's Degree   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Other:.....       |                          |

Q1.03. For how long have you been a teacher?                      \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ [YEARS]

Q1.04. For how long have you been HoD?                                \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ [YEARS]

## Section 2: Interview guide for HoDs instructional leadership role

### Discussion points

1. What is your understanding of the concept of instructional leadership?
  - Probe on what they know and how they can define the concept
2. What is your understanding of your role as instructional leader in your department?
3. What specific practices do you carry out as an instructional leader in the department?
  - Probe on the specific practices they carry out that are aligned with instructional leadership.
4. How do you manage instruction in your department?
  - Probe on how they
    - coordinate the teaching curriculum
    - monitor teaching and learning
    - monitor student performance.
5. What do you perceive as the IL practices' effect on students' performance?
  - Probe on experiences and views about student performance, perception of the link between IL and student performance.
6. Do you have any other comment?



### SECTION 3 - Instructional leadership roles

*In the following section, there are statements regarding practice of instructional leadership. Please tick against the statement that match with the understanding of your instructional leadership role.*

|                                                                                                              |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Develop a focused wide goal for the department                                                               |  |
| Communicate goals effectively                                                                                |  |
| Discuss goals with teachers during departmental meetings                                                     |  |
| Ensure that classroom priorities of teachers are consistent with the set departmental goals and school goals |  |
| Guide teachers in planning schemes of work and checking if the work planned is being done                    |  |
| Visit classrooms to supervise                                                                                |  |
| Evaluate teachers to improve instruction practices                                                           |  |
| Review students work when evaluating classroom instruction by checking mark books                            |  |
| Meet individually with teachers to discuss academic progress of students in subjects within the department   |  |
| Discuss item analysis of tests with teachers in department to identify weaknesses in the instruction program |  |
| Inform the teachers about curricula materials available in the department                                    |  |
| Protect instructional time                                                                                   |  |
| Provide incentives for teachers                                                                              |  |
| Promote professional development                                                                             |  |
| Maintain high visibility                                                                                     |  |

Thank you for your time and participation.