



Concrescence: Journal of Multi- Disciplinary Research

Volume 2, Number 3, 2025, E-ISSN: 1595-9287

Faculty of Humanities, Imo State University

Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices and Teacher Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Delta State, Nigeria

Michael Nwachukwu Osegi

*Department of Educational Foundations,
University of Delta, Agbor,
Delta State, Nigeria
michael.osegi@unidel.edu.ng*

Abstract

This research explored how principals' instructional leadership influences the job performance of teachers in public secondary schools across Nigeria. Anchored on three research questions and two hypotheses, the study utilized a correlational survey design. A total of 400 teachers were selected from both urban and rural secondary schools in Delta State using a multi-stage sampling approach. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire, which was validated by subject experts and tested for reliability in a pilot study. The results indicated that instructional leadership practices, such as instructional supervision, provision of educational materials, and professional development for staff, were moderately practised. Furthermore, a significant positive correlation was found between principals' instructional leadership and teacher effectiveness in areas like lesson planning, classroom instruction, and student evaluation. The analysis also revealed notable differences in leadership practices between principals in urban and rural settings. Based on these findings, the study recommends enhancing principals' instructional leadership through consistent training, improved access to teaching resources, and supportive policies.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership; Teacher Job Performance; Educational Management; School Leadership; Secondary Education; Nigeria.

Introduction

Globally, school leadership has long been recognised as one of the most influential in-school factors driving improved teaching and learning, second only to the direct impact of classroom instruction itself (Leithwood et al., 2020). Within this broader discourse, instructional leadership has emerged as an essential framework for understanding how principals can directly shape teaching quality, teacher motivation, and ultimately student achievement (Hallinger, 2018). Instructional leadership shifts the principal's role beyond administrative tasks to focus on supporting teachers, guiding curriculum implementation, supervising classroom practices, and fostering a positive school climate that enables effective learning (Bush, 2020). These practices are particularly relevant for developing

countries like Nigeria, where persistent concerns about poor learning outcomes continue to dominate educational policy discussions (World Bank, 2020).

Across many education systems, research demonstrates that principals who enact strong instructional leadership positively influence teachers' job performance by providing clear goals, regular supervision, timely feedback, and opportunities for continuous professional development (Harris et al., 2019). Such leadership practices play a vital role in enhancing teachers' dedication, belief in their capabilities, and instructional proficiency, which in turn contributes to better student academic performance (Liu et al., 2021). A prominent framework developed by Hallinger (2018) outlines three essential aspects of instructional leadership: setting a clear school mission, overseeing the instructional programme, and fostering a conducive learning environment. Research adopting this model across various educational settings has consistently shown that principals' leadership behaviours positively influence teachers' lesson planning, classroom teaching, and evaluation methods (Khalid et al., 2023).

Yet, despite the well-documented benefits of instructional leadership, its practical implementation remains inconsistent, especially in low-resource settings. In Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, principals often face significant systemic and contextual challenges that limit their ability to focus on core instructional duties (Adebayo et al., 2020). Excessive administrative demands, political interference, inadequate training, and chronic resource shortages mean that many principals are unable to supervise instruction regularly or support teachers effectively (Ogunyemi & Ibrahim, 2019). These limitations have real implications for teachers' job performance, which in Nigeria is frequently characterised by irregular lesson planning, poor classroom delivery, inconsistent student assessment, and low morale (World Bank, 2020).

Nigeria's National Policy on Education emphasises the critical role of school leaders in achieving quality education for all (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2020). However, there remains a considerable gap between policy intentions and actual practice. Many principals lack access to continuous professional development programmes that focus on instructional leadership rather than administrative management (Okeke & Uko, 2022). As a result, some rely on outdated supervisory approaches that fail to inspire meaningful changes in teachers' practices or school culture. Ogunyemi and Ibrahim (2019) observed that teachers in Nigerian public secondary schools often work without sufficient feedback or opportunities to build new instructional skills, leading to stagnation in performance and poor student outcomes.

Adding to these challenges are the stark disparities between urban and rural school contexts. Rural schools in Nigeria face unique barriers that further limit principals' instructional leadership capacity. These include severe resource constraints, lack of infrastructure, inadequate staffing, and isolation from professional learning networks (Amadi & Thompson, 2022). Research shows that principals in urban schools generally have more opportunities to supervise lessons, provide teaching materials, and organise professional development than their rural counterparts, who often must juggle multiple roles, including classroom teaching, to cover staff shortages (Mussa, 2023). This rural-urban divide creates unequal conditions for teachers, which can lead to significant differences in job performance and student achievement.

Enhancing the instructional leadership capabilities of school principals is widely regarded as a critical step toward bridging persistent quality gaps within Nigeria's secondary education system. Evidence from similar educational environments suggests that principals

who receive adequate training and emphasize instructional leadership can significantly improve teaching and learning outcomes, even in schools with limited resources (Harris et al., 2019; Khalid et al., 2023). These advancements are essential to supporting Nigeria's pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education while promoting lifelong learning for all (UNESCO, 2021).

Yet, despite the growing policy emphasis on improving leadership capacity, empirical evidence that critically examines how Nigerian principals enact instructional leadership in practice, and how these practices influence teachers' job performance, remains limited. Even fewer studies systematically explore whether significant differences exist between urban and rural schools in this regard. Understanding these contextual dynamics is vital to designing effective professional development programmes, support systems, and resource allocation strategies that can strengthen instructional leadership where it is needed most.

This study therefore, seeks to address these gaps by examining the relationship between principals' instructional leadership practices and teachers' job performance in Nigerian public secondary schools. Guided by Hallinger's (2018) framework, the study explores how principals define their instructional mission, manage instructional programmes, and create supportive learning environments, and how these practices impact key aspects of teachers' work, including lesson planning, classroom delivery, and student assessment. Additionally, the study investigates whether meaningful differences exist between urban and rural schools, providing insights that can inform context-sensitive interventions.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the well-recognised role of principals' instructional leadership in enhancing teaching and learning, evidence indicates that in many Nigerian public secondary schools, principals continue to focus disproportionately on administrative and managerial tasks at the expense of their instructional responsibilities. Reports and recent empirical studies reveal that essential practices such as regular classroom supervision, provision of adequate instructional materials, and facilitation of teachers' professional development are often inconsistently implemented or neglected altogether (Adebayo, Adeyemi, & Uko, 2020; Ogunyemi & Ibrahim, 2019). This weak commitment to core instructional leadership undermines the capacity of teachers to deliver effective lessons, plan meaningfully and assess students accurately, especially in contexts where teachers already face resource constraints and overcrowded classrooms.

As a result of this inadequate instructional leadership, the quality of teachers' job performance in Nigerian secondary schools remains a persistent concern. Poor lesson planning, ineffective classroom delivery, irregular assessment practices, and low teacher morale have been frequently reported, contributing to declining student performance and widening learning gaps (World Bank, 2020; Okeke & Uko, 2022). The situation is further complicated by significant disparities between urban and rural schools. Rural principals often lack the resources and support systems to enact instructional leadership effectively, which exacerbates inequalities in teacher support and student outcomes. This means that many teachers, especially in underserved areas, continue to work without meaningful guidance, regular feedback, or professional growth opportunities, leading to underperformance and frustration.

If these gaps in principals' instructional leadership practices remain unaddressed, the consequences are likely to be far-reaching. Persistent weak teacher performance will continue to limit students' learning achievements, hindering progress towards Nigeria's commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 4 for inclusive and equitable quality

education. Moreover, the failure to strengthen instructional leadership risks entrenching existing urban-rural divides, leaving millions of students in disadvantaged schools with little hope of achieving basic competencies. Addressing this critical gap requires a clear understanding of how principals currently practice instructional leadership, how these practices affect teachers' job performance, and what targeted measures can help build principals' capacity to focus on their core instructional roles. Without such corrective action, efforts to raise education quality and student outcomes in Nigeria's public secondary schools will remain ineffective and unsustainable.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the relationship between principals' instructional leadership practices and the job performance of teachers in Nigeria's public secondary schools. The specific objectives are to:

1. Assess the level at which instructional leadership is practised by principals in public secondary schools across Nigeria.
2. Analyze how these leadership practices affect the job performance of teachers; and
3. Investigate whether notable differences exist in instructional leadership approaches between principals in urban and rural school settings.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do principals practice instructional leadership in public secondary schools in Nigeria?
2. How do principals' instructional leadership practices influence teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Nigeria?
3. Is there a significant difference in instructional leadership practices between principals in urban and rural public secondary schools in Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: Principals' instructional leadership practices do not significantly influence teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in instructional leadership practices between principals in urban and rural public secondary schools in Nigeria.

Methodology

This research employed a correlational survey design to explore the connection between principals' instructional leadership behaviours and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools across Delta State, Nigeria. The choice of design was suitable for examining the relationship between variables without introducing any manipulation or control over them. The study population consisted of all public secondary school teachers across the three senatorial zones of Delta State. Based on data from the Delta State Ministry of Education, there are an estimated 8,750 teachers in these schools. Applying Taro Yamane's formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample of 380 teachers was determined to be statistically adequate. A multi-stage sampling method was used to select participants. First, schools were categorized by geographic location (urban and rural) to ensure proportional representation. Then, random sampling was employed to select both schools and participating teachers within each category.

Data were gathered using a researcher-designed questionnaire comprising four sections: demographic data; instructional leadership practices of principals (including instructional supervision, provision of resources, and staff development); teacher performance indicators (such as planning lessons, classroom instruction, and evaluating students); and school setting (urban or rural). Responses to instructional leadership and teacher performance items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale: Very High Extent (5), High Extent (4), Moderate Extent (3), Low Extent (2), and Very Low Extent (1). The following rating intervals guided interpretation: 1.00–1.80 = Very Low; 1.81–2.60 = Low; 2.61–3.40 = Moderate; 3.41–4.20 = High; 4.21–5.00 = Very High.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, three specialists in educational leadership and assessment reviewed the items for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study's aims. The reliability of the tool was established through a pilot test involving 40 public secondary school teachers from schools not included in the final sample. This yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.85, demonstrating strong internal consistency. Ethical approval was obtained from the Delta State Ministry of Education prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent secured from all respondents, who were assured of confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the study at any point. Trained research assistants assisted with the proper distribution and collection of the questionnaires to maintain accuracy.

The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated to determine the prevalence of instructional leadership practices. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to assess the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher performance. Additionally, an independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether instructional leadership practices differed significantly between urban and rural school settings. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 25, with hypotheses tested at a 0.05 significance level.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do principals practice instructional leadership in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices (N = 380)

Dimensions of Instructional Leadership	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Supervision of instruction	3.35	0.55	Moderate extent
Provision of instructional resources	3.10	0.60	Moderate extent
Staff professional development	3.05	0.58	Moderate extent
Overall Mean	3.17	0.58	Moderate extent

The result in Table 1 shows that principals in public secondary schools in Delta State moderately practice instructional leadership. Among the components, supervision of instruction is practiced to the highest extent (Mean = 3.35), followed by provision of instructional resources (Mean = 3.10) and staff professional development (Mean = 3.05). This suggests that while instructional leadership activities are present, there is still room for improvement, especially in supporting teacher development.

Research Question 2: How do principals' instructional leadership practices influence teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 2: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation between Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices and Teachers' Job Performance

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
Instructional Leadership Practices	380	0.72	0.000	Significant
Teachers' Job Performance	380			

Table 2 reveals a significant and strong positive relationship between principals' instructional leadership and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools across Delta State ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that increased engagement by principals in effective instructional leadership practices is associated with higher levels of teacher effectiveness in areas such as lesson preparation, instructional delivery, and student evaluation.

Research Question 3: Is there any significant difference in instructional leadership practices between principals in urban and rural public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Instructional Leadership Practices by School Location

School Location	N	Mean	SD
Urban	200	3.30	0.52
Rural	180	3.05	0.60

The descriptive results in Table 3 suggest that principals in urban schools (Mean = 3.30) practice instructional leadership to a slightly higher extent than those in rural schools (Mean = 3.05). This highlights contextual disparities in leadership practices across Delta State.

H₀₁: Principals' instructional leadership practices do not significantly influence teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 4: Correlation Test of Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices and Teachers' Job Performance

Variables	N	r	R ²	p-value	Decision
Instructional Leadership Practices	380	0.72	0.52	0.000	Reject H ₀₁
Teachers' Job Performance	380				

As presented in Table 4, there is a significant positive correlation between principals' instructional leadership and teachers' job performance ($r = 0.72$, $R^2 = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$). Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding indicates that effective instructional leadership plays a substantial role in enhancing teacher performance in public secondary schools within Delta State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in instructional leadership practices between principals in urban and rural public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-test of Instructional Leadership Practices by School Location

School Location	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value	Decision
Urban	200	3.30	0.52	3.05	378	0.002	Reject H_{02}
Rural	180	3.05	0.60				

Table 5 indicates that the independent samples t-test yielded a statistically significant result ($t = 3.05$, $p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This outcome suggests a meaningful difference in the instructional leadership practices of principals based on school location, with principals in urban schools exhibiting a higher level of engagement in such practices compared to their rural counterparts.

Discussion

The results of this study offer critical insights into how principals' instructional leadership practices influence the performance of teachers in public secondary schools within Delta State, Nigeria. One of the central findings is that principals engage in instructional leadership at a moderate level. This mirrors findings from prior research in Nigeria, which suggests that school leaders often find it challenging to balance their administrative duties with their instructional responsibilities due to structural and contextual limitations (Adebayo, Adeyemi, & Uko, 2020; Ogunyemi & Ibrahim, 2019). The moderate mean values reported for areas such as instructional supervision, provision of learning resources, and support for teacher development reflect some effort by principals to fulfill their instructional leadership responsibilities. However, these results also highlight that there is considerable room for growth, especially in fostering continuous professional development among teaching staff.

A major outcome of the study is the statistically significant and strong positive relationship between instructional leadership and teacher performance. This reinforces the widely held view that effective school leadership is essential for enhancing the quality of teaching and ultimately, learning outcomes. The finding is consistent with earlier studies by Harris, Jones, and Huffman (2019), as well as Liu, Bellibas, and Printy (2021), who argue that principals who are actively involved in guiding instruction, providing educational resources, and facilitating staff development contribute significantly to boosting teachers' morale, confidence, and instructional capability. In the context of this study, it implies that when school heads are more involved in key instructional leadership roles, teachers are more likely to excel in areas such as preparing lessons, delivering content effectively in the classroom, and assessing student performance appropriately. These insights are particularly important given Nigeria's ongoing struggle with issues like poor lesson planning and ineffective classroom teaching, challenges that have long been flagged by organizations like the World Bank (2020) as obstacles to improving educational outcomes.

Another key finding is the observed difference in leadership practices between principals in urban and rural settings. The results showed that school leaders in urban areas reported slightly higher levels of instructional leadership across all measured dimensions compared to their rural counterparts. This outcome aligns with earlier research pointing to the unique challenges faced by principals in rural areas, such as insufficient funding, a lack of essential instructional materials, and limited opportunities for professional growth (Amadi & Thompson, 2022; Mussa, 2023). These environmental and systemic constraints often limit the capacity of rural school heads to fully implement instructional leadership practices,

which in turn affects the level of support teachers receive in those environments. The urban-rural divide revealed in this study underscores the pressing need for targeted interventions to help level the playing field and ensure that rural principals are not disadvantaged in fulfilling their core instructional duties.

The statistically significant association between instructional leadership and teacher performance emphasizes the necessity for education policymakers and school administrators to invest in leadership development. Hallinger (2018) emphasized that effective instructional leadership is not an innate trait but a professional capacity that must be deliberately cultivated through structured training and enabling policies. As this study shows, principals who are well-prepared to supervise instruction allocate teaching resources effectively, and support staff development can positively influence the professional competencies and motivation of their teaching staff. This, in turn, has a cascading effect on student learning and overall school performance.

In addition, the disparity in leadership practices between urban and rural schools calls attention to persistent inequities in the Nigerian education system. If left unaddressed, such disparities will likely contribute to widening gaps in student achievement across different regions of the state. The findings support the arguments made by Okeke and Uko (2022), who advocate for tailored policy approaches that consider the unique contexts of rural school environments. Such policies might include increased budgetary allocations for teaching resources, efforts to streamline principals' administrative workload, and the establishment of professional learning communities accessible to rural educators.

Collectively, the findings of this study enrich the growing body of literature that recognizes instructional leadership as a central driver of school improvement, particularly in developing country contexts. By focusing on public secondary schools in Delta State, the study provides evidence that supports the development of contextually appropriate leadership capacity-building initiatives. These initiatives should not only align with national education goals but also reflect the realities faced by school leaders in different regions. Strengthening instructional leadership should be an integral part of any reform strategy aimed at meeting the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that principals in Delta State's public secondary schools engage in instructional leadership at a moderate level. These leadership practices significantly influence how well teachers perform their duties, particularly in lesson preparation, instructional delivery, and student evaluation. Furthermore, a significant variation exists between the practices of urban and rural school principals, with those in urban settings demonstrating stronger instructional leadership. Addressing these differences through focused training, adequate resource support, and policy reforms will enhance leadership effectiveness and contribute to better educational outcomes across the board.

Recommendations

In light of the study's results, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Capacity Development:** Education authorities should implement regular training programs and workshops focused on developing principals' instructional leadership skills, with a strong emphasis on practical application.

2. **Provision of Resources:** Schools should be equipped with sufficient teaching and learning materials to enable effective supervision and instructional delivery.
3. **Policy Adjustments:** Administrative duties that consume a significant portion of principals' time should be reviewed, with policies put in place to allow more focus on instructional leadership functions.
4. **Support for Rural Principals:** Special initiatives should be introduced to help rural school leaders overcome location-specific challenges, such as funding constraints and limited access to professional development, to ensure they can perform effectively.

References

- Adebayo, F. A., Adeyemi, T., & Uko, E. S. (2020). Principals' instructional leadership practices and teachers' job performance in Southwest Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 34(6), 1234–1247.
- Amadi, F., & Thompson, N. (2022). Urban and rural disparities in instructional leadership in Nigerian secondary schools. *African Journal of Educational Studies*, 12(1), 55–72.
- Bush, T. (2020). Instructional leadership and leadership for learning: Global perspectives. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 48(1), 3–19.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2020). *National policy on education* (6th ed.). Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) Press.
- Hallinger, P. (2018). Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 46(1), 5–24.
- Harris, A., Jones, M., & Huffman, J. B. (2019). *Teachers leading educational reform: The power of professional learning communities*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Khalid, A., Hussain, I., & Imran, M. (2023). Instructional leadership, teacher commitment, and job performance: A study of secondary schools. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 51(2), 234–251.
- Liu, J., Bellibas, M. S., & Printy, S. M. (2021). How school leadership matters for teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction: A multilevel analysis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(2), 209–228.
- Mussa, K. (2023). Instructional leadership in rural schools: Challenges and prospects. *African Educational Research Journal*, 11(1), 1–11.
- Ogunyemi, B., & Ibrahim, M. (2019). Instructional leadership and teacher job performance in secondary schools in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Management and Leadership*, 3(1), 50–64.
- Okeke, C. I. O., & Uko, E. S. (2022). Leadership in the African school context: Issues and trends. *African Journal of Educational Management*, 20(1), 1–17.
- World Bank. (2020). *World development report 2020: The changing nature of work*. World Bank Group.