



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
INSTRUCTORS AT MALAYSIAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES***

**MEHRNAZ FAHIMIRAD**

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INSTRUCTORS AT MALAYSIAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES**

By

**MEHRNAZ FAHIMIRAD**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**October 2016**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment  
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**October 2016**

**Chairman : Associate Professor Khairuddin Bin Idris, PhD**  
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From the original idea of the university, changes and developments have deeply affected and shaped universities teaching and learning. As the focus on instructional leadership continues, questions have risen concerning leadership role and identifying capabilities and effective practices of instructional leaders in learning and teaching at Research Universities in Malaysia. Instructional leaders inspire, motivate, facilitate, lead, and direct other academic members in the higher education institutions to achieve organizational goals.

This study provides an in-depth look at the practices of leadership in Malaysian Research Universities. This study employs a qualitative research approach. Data were collected through in-depth interview with people who hold leadership positions and have good influence on teaching and learning at research universities and analysis of relevant documents. This analysis produced the emerging themes of the study. The findings of this study support the fundamental elements that have been previously identified by researchers and professional organizations, as instructional leadership. Instructional leaders focus on learning and teaching for students in relation to instructor development. Based on the findings of this study the following conclusions were made: leadership works towards the future of the university through the development and involvement of instructors to facilitate teaching and learning at research universities.

Malaysian research universities planned through sustained programs of educational development to link theory with practice. Academics can learn to use these principles effectively in designing learning environments for students. Secondly, academics need a supportive culture if they are to put these principles into practice. And, finally, creating a learning culture depends not only on well-educated, well-meaning individual academics, but also on an academic community working together to create a student-centered learning orientation. However, the findings revealed that research universities place less emphasis on leadership of teaching and learning for students'

development and understandably concentrate on research. The Best practices of Malaysian instructional leaders were identified and presented as general guidelines for good and effective teaching that are supported by research.

Professional development of instructors and the integrity of beliefs in pursuing organizational vision and strong professional development will support effective implementation of instructional leaders' work. Instructional leaders provide opportunity for professional development of instructors at higher education. Finally, a number of recommendations have been offered towards future research and teaching and learning practices by instructional leaders.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

## **KEPIMPINAN INSTRUKSIONAL DAN PEMBANGUNAN INSTRUKTOR DI UNIVERSITI PENYELIDIKAN MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Daripada idea asal universiti, perubahan dan pembangunan amat mempengaruhi dan membentuk pengajaran dan pembelajaran di universiti. Oleh fokus terhadap kepimpinan pengajaran membawa persoalan terhadap peranan kepimpinan dan mengenal pasti kapabiliti dan amalan yang efektif terhadap pemimpin instruksional dalam pembelajaran dan pengajaran di Universiti Penyelidikan di Malaysia. Kepimpinan instruksional merujuk pada fungsi dan peranan kepimpinan dalam sektor pendidikan tinggi. Pemimpin instruksional menggalakkan, memotivasikan, membimbing, memimpin dan mengarah ahli akademik di institusi pendidikan tinggi untuk mencapai matlamat organisasi.

Kajian ini memberi pandangan yang mendalam mengenai amalan kepimpinan di Universiti Penyelidikan di Malaysia yang telah dikenal pasti sebagai mengamalkan kepimpinan instruksional. Dapatan kajian ini menyokong elemen asas yang telah dikenal pasti sebelum ini oleh penyelidik dan organisasi profesional, sebagai kepimpinan instruksional. Lebih khusus lagi, pemimpin instruksional memberikan fokus pada pembelajaran dan pengajaran untuk pelajar dalam hubungannya dengan pembangunan instruktur.

Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan penyelidikan kualitatif. Data dikumpul melalui temu bual yang mendalam dengan responden yang memegang jawatan kepimpinan dan mempunyai pengaruh dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran di universiti penyelidikan serta analisis dokumen yang berkaitan. Analisis ini akan menjawab beberapa persoalan dalam kajian ini.

Berdasarkan dapatan kajian, kesimpulan berikut telah diperoleh: pemimpin bekerja ke arah masa hadapan universiti melalui pembangunan dan penglibatan para instruktur bagi memantapkan pengajaran dan pembelajaran di universiti penyelidikan.

Universiti penyelidikan di Malaysia merancang melalui program yang terjamin bagi pembangunan pendidikan untuk mengaitkan teori dan amalan supaya para akademik dapat mempelajari prinsip tersebut dalam mereka bentuk persekitaran pembelajaran bagi pelajar mereka. Kedua, para akademik memerlukan budaya yang menyokong mereka melaksanakan prinsip pengajaran sebagai amalan. Akhirnya, pembentukan budaya pembelajaran tidak hanya bergantung kepada mereka yang berpengetahuan dan juga berprihatin, tetapi juga keseluruhan komuniti akademik yang berkerjasama ke arah membentuk pengajaran dan pembelajaran berpusatkan pelajar. Pembangunan profesional untuk instruktur dan integriti kepercayaan bagi memperoleh visi sesebuah organisasi dan pembangunan profesional yang mantap akan membantu pemimpin instruksional dalam mengimplementasikan amalan kerja supaya lebih efektif. Pemimpin instruksional harus menyediakan peluang untuk membangunkan profesionalisma instruktur dalam sektor pendidikan tinggi. Akhirnya, beberapa cadangan dikemukakan mengenai amalan pengajaran dan pembelajaran oleh pemimpin pengajaran serta cadangan mengenai kajian masa hadapan.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

It is widely accepted that the pressures for universities to change are immense (Scott, Coates, & Anderson, 2008b). Government funding for higher education is no longer an automatic annual allocated budget but is based on competition and performance, backed by good financial management as well as good academic leadership (Shattock, 2013). As an academic organization, the universities' frameworks are geared towards sustaining the business of teaching through various models in teaching and learning. Relating to university history, Newman through his remarkable discourse on the character of a university put forward his famous The Idea of a University. In it he favored the university as a place for the teaching of universal knowledge. He expounded the virtues of liberal education and opposed the inclusion of research into university activity. To Newman, the cultivation of the intellectual should be the ultimate aim of a university education (L. Evans, 2002). Hence, it can be argued that leadership in teaching and learning is a key variable and clear pointer to a successful university.

According to the previous literature the most critical element in the achievement of the Malaysia National Mission 2020 is the "quality of the human capital." The relevant parts state that, "Human capital development will be holistic; encompassing the acquisition of knowledge and skills or intellectual capital including science and technology (S&T) and entrepreneurial capabilities through education, training and lifelong learning." In support of this, the Education Development Plan (2001-2010) stresses that; "Tertiary education is the major means of meeting human resource needs if Malaysia is to achieve its vision of becoming an industrialized nation..." (Education & Instruction, 2001). Generous funding has been allotted to universities, "The government has allocated and invested more than RM3 billion to public universities to undertake research in various disciplines. The new Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) is very committed to enhance capacity building towards the development of human capital in research and development (R&D), innovations in enterprises, and to leverage on assets that can be garnered from university research towards strengthening the economic competitiveness of the nation." One of the measures taken by the Ministry of Higher Education to activate and jumpstart research in higher education is to designate and upgrade certain key universities as research universities. There are five in all and they are Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Malaya (UM) and University Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). The aims of these research universities are to develop creative and innovative human resource, develop globally competitive new technological products for the industries of tomorrow and to be the engine of growth, particularly for the fields of science and technology.

What are the present expectations of academics in relation to teaching and learning in these universities? It is stated in the 9th Malaysia Plan that “institutions will be required to conform to the standards for quality assurance procedures set out in the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). The foundation of the MQF is principally expressed as learning outcomes or competency standards, the academic volume expressed as credits in terms of total student effort to achieve the learning outcomes, the purpose and character of the qualifications and consistency of nomenclature.”

From the original idea of the university, changes and developments have deeply affected and shaped universities teaching and learning (Scott et al., 2008b). Universities have also become more like businesses in many aspects (Gonzales & Auerbach, 2010). Universities are affected by external factors such as changing expectations and demands from students and stakeholders, a more globally competitive environment, higher expectations from industry, outcomes based performance, and the role of technology in changing the way teaching and learning takes place. In terms of internal factors, some self-imposed procedures complicate the delivery of teaching and learning depriving students and lecturers of needed creativity, flexibility, and time to optimize meaningful learning. A lack of systematic succession planning in academic leadership detracts from maintaining continuity in teaching and learning related policies and practices. All these factors contribute to the need to reconceptualize university teaching and learning (Scott, Coates, & Anderson, 2008b).

The Malaysian government has seen it as pertinent to steer the direction of the national higher education system to ensure national interest is protected and developed in line with Vision 2020. In doing so, the Government has launched the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2020 and National Higher Education Action Plan 2001-2010 as the means to transform the Malaysian higher education system consistent with the aim to raise the capacity for knowledge and innovation of the expected first-class human capital. The first phase – Laying the Foundation has passed and we are now entering the second phase. The second thrust of the plan, to improve the quality of teaching and learning is regarded as one of the key determinant factors to contribute to the transformation of higher learning institutions, especially the transformation of teaching and learning in research universities.

Higher education institutions are increasingly faced with pressures to change their practices of learning and teaching to meet the demands of industrial sectors, students, and government for accountability in the age of decreasing public funding (Hamidifar, Vinitwatanakhun, & Roodposhti, 2013). In addition, universities in particular have to fulfill the pressures of meeting professional standards in relevant programmes and to use online learning to facilitate students' learning experiences. The emphasis is now on 'learning and teaching' rather than 'teaching and learning'. Therefore, full commitment to learning and teaching through the application of suitable models based on sound policies and strategies, and guided by strong academic leadership is demanded on universities to add value to students educational experiences.

### **1.1.1 Leaders and Leadership Styles**

Universities are different from other organizations because of their unique activities. One of the most important and current discussion in higher education institutions is the role of Instructional leaders. The role of Instructional leaders is to encourage and support the instructional process of teaching and learning in a relation to students learning outcome and instructors development. They can motivate and encourage lecturers and other academic staff of the university to do beyond what is expected of them. There is an agreement in the literature that Instructional leaders can influence their universities and the larger society significantly in many ways, forms, direct or indirectly. At department level for instance, the key to improvement in teaching and students learning depends on the departmental leadership (Knight & Trowler, 2000). Researches have shown that the experience of Instructional leadership has a significant impact on the quality of student learning (Martin, Trigwell, Prosser & Ramsden, 2003; Robinson & Timperley, 2007). There is a relationship between the conception of leadership in teaching, how educators perceived leadership and how the educators approach their teaching. Transformational leadership is one of the integrative leadership theories, which its main characteristic is direct organizational change effectively. Transformational leadership concentrates on demands and motives, which are more intrinsic, have a higher order and are ethical (Sergiovanni, 2002). Transformational leaders are proactive in that they can develop followers' capabilities, help map new directions, mobilize resources, facilitate and support instructional process in a relation to teaching and learning for faculty and university.

### **1.2 Characteristics of Participated Organizations**

What is a Research University? Research Universities are public universities recognized by the Cabinet on 11 October 2006 to become a leading research and educational hub. Recognition of a research university is based on eight selection criteria determined by the Assessment of Research Universities Committee. These criteria have been developed with a focus on aspects of R&D and based on also the criteria adopted by several leading international rating agencies. The marking criteria are as follows:

**Table 1.1: Research Universities**

No	Criteria	Weightage
1	Quantity and quality of researchers	25
2	Quantity and quality of research	30
3	Post graduate quantity	10
4	Post graduate quality	5
5	innovation	10
6	Professional services and awards	7
7	Network and links	8
8	Support facilities	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

### **1.2.1 Mission of Research Universities**

The mission of research universities is to become the nation's growth engines, offer opportunities for students and academics alike to exchange ideas, and conduct research in a conducive environment which will spur exploration and creativity in the exploration of knowledge and generation of wealth, thus increasing the quality of life.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

The Malaysian government has seen it as pertinent to steer the directions of the national higher education system to ensure national interest is protected and developed in line with Vision 2020 (Sirat, 2013). In doing so, the Government has launched the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2020 and National Higher Education Action Plan 2001-2010 as the means to transform the Malaysian higher education consistent with the aim to raise the capacity for knowledge and innovation of the expected first-class human capital (Burke, 2008). In view of this situation, higher education aims to improve the practices of teaching and learning as one of the key determinant initiative to contribute to the transformation toward the research universities and explore the factors contributing to effective instructional leadership in terms of learning and teaching at universities (Jeffrey W. Alstete, 2010), with the emphasis on industry community engagement, character building, entrepreneurship, employability in higher education. Therefore, the purpose was to explain how instructional leader influence instructors' teaching practices. However, other factors influencing instructional leadership and develop the capacity of instructors.

Similarly, there has been a strong impetus towards student focused learning activities at universities. Emphasis has also been given to deep learning (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004). These changes point to the fact that teaching and learning at universities are undergoing changes that will have an effect on the organization and its leadership. The literature review also shows that, the way lecturers experience the leadership of their division is an important precursor to the quality of student learning outcomes and their departments' achievement.



In theory instructional leaders should consider how their leadership skills could transform an organization to have meaningful teaching and learning practices (Burns, 1978). To support the idea of transformational leadership another study on transformational leadership Klar & Brewer, (2013) revealed that educational leaders need to be transformational instructional leaders, empowering others and enacting positive change within the organization. However, there has been little explanation on the actual process of the transformational leadership among leaders.

All above leads to analyzing and determining the instructional gaps between the best practices in the structures and processes for teaching and learning of instructional leadership in the public institutions of higher learning and subsequently working out the objective basis on which to improve the process.

Furthermore, the concept of instructional leadership has considerably been investigated in context of school in relation to the role of principal and instructional leaders in terms of teaching and learning. Therefore, the role of instructional leadership has not been examined in the context of higher education. (Petrov, & Gosling, 2008; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2000). This research aims to fill this gap in existing literature to examine the roles of instructional leaders at higher education in research universities in Malaysia to identify the best practices in teaching and learning.

However, the majority of higher education research on leadership largely fail to notice the role of the instructional leadership both informal; distributed leaders (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001) and formal leaders in universities. Taking into account that conducting research is more highly valued and rewarded in context of higher education, this gap generally might reveal the priorities of academic circles. However, the existing literature lacks attention to leading teaching and learning activities runs against to the trend of offering instructional development for academics in the world (Gosling, 2009; Lee, Manathunga, & Kandlbinder, 2008).

The limited literature focused on the role of the instructional leader's provides many research opportunities. As such the experience of instructional leadership has a significant impact on the quality of student learning (Trigwell, Prosser, Martin, & Ramsden, 2005). Moreover, there is a relationship between the conception of leadership in teaching, how instructors perceive leadership and how the instructors approach their teaching. Several dimensions of leadership practices were found to be critical to the improvement of learning and teaching (Catano & Stronge, 2007). Determining these factors to show how leaders successfully balance the needs of their university and continuously to develop and refine their leadership skills. Thus, the above research has important significant to the determination, communication and application of leadership capabilities applied at research universities (Reviews, 2010).

The instructional leadership concept is oriented towards transformational leadership. Any concepts from leadership theory and research are derived within higher

educational research, are related to transformational leadership (Bryman, 1992; Pielstick, 1998). It is also considerable to mention that majority of writers on higher education leadership support the notion that transformational leadership provides the best model for understanding and developing general principles for leaders in the sector (Bensimon, et al. (1989); Birnbaum, R. (1992). According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership entails binding ‘leader and follower together in a mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose’, which in practice may or may not entail an element of organizational transformation.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Generally, the study aims to conceptualize effective instructional leadership at development of instructors in Malaysian higher education universities. This research was conducted with the following questions:

- 1) What are the current practices of leadership in teaching and learning in Malaysian research universities?
- 2) How do instructional leaders orientate the teaching and learning process in Malaysian research universities ?
- 3) How do universities develop the instructional capacity of Instructors ?

#### **1.5 Significance of The Study**

This study has policy implications and impacts on the achievement of the transformation plan particularly on the conceptualization of instructional leadership and the development of instructors on research universities in Malaysia. The outcomes are expected to enhance the strategic direction of instructional leadership in the country. With the consent of the main stakeholder (MOHE) it is also expected that a new practice of effective instructional leadership in learning and teaching will be developed. This study makes a useful contribution to both the basic and applied research. According to Burns (1978) transformational leadership is based on an exchange relationship between leader and follower. Thus, transformational leadership takes place when leaders interact with followers in ways that enhance their productivity, creativity and development in department. Transformational leaders manage to motivate others to achieve more than originally planned or intended; they create a supportive academic culture where individual needs and differences are acknowledged and respected (Burns, 1978).

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study focuses on Research Universities in public universities in Malaysia. There are some limitation in this study. This study attempted to address the Malaysian research universities heads of departments' Instructional leadership style in relation to teaching and learning for instructors development. It cant be generalized to other universities in Malaysia.

The study is based on qualitative method . Interviews were conducted with instructional leaders from Malaysian research universities comprising Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic Affairs) and Deputy Deans (Academic Affairs) as the population of the study. The data has been mainly collected from face to face interviews with the willingness of the respondents while those not ready to be interviewed were excluded. . Besides the interviews, documentary analysis was utilized to collect data regarding the practices of instructional leaders at higher education.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

### **1.7.1 Research Universities**

Research university (RU) or world-class university is concept that is used to call institutions of higher education which are well- known around the globe in terms of highly qualified academic staff, quality teaching and excellent research (Salmi, 2009).

### **1.7.2 Teaching and Learning Process**

Is the heart of education. On it depends the fulfillment of the aims & objectives of education. It is the most powerful instrument of education to bring about desired changes in the students. In teaching - learning process, the teacher, the learner, the curriculum & other variables are organized in a systematic way to attain some pre-determined goal.

University's prime functions has always been circled around research, teaching and extension services (Evans, 2002). Each of the functions complement each other. Teaching, for instance combines the knowledge garnered from research and extension services into the lesson. Teaching disseminates the empirical and practical findings and thus shape the education of both students, educators and researchers.

### **1.7.3 Instructional leadership**

Instructional Leadership is defined as leaders who encourage educational achievement by making instructional quality the top priority of university (Bredeson, 2009). Instructional leadership, as described by Blase and Blase (2004) is leadership that is shared with instructors through coaching, reflection, study teams, and problem solving staff and administrators work together to provide service to students and university.

### **1.7.4 Effective Instructional leadership**

Instructional leadership refers to leadership in the higher education sector. Instructional leaders are needed to inspire, motivate, lead, and direct the other departments' heads and members in the direction of the organizations' vision Gmelch, W. H. (2002). Effective Instructional leadership in higher education refers to the positive impact of leadership functions on the achievement of organizational goals ( Ramsden, Prosser, Trigwell, & Martin, 2007).

In theory, instructional leaders in universities would be appointed based on their background and performance in teaching and learning. According to this definition, activities in which instructional leaders would engage include the following:

- 1) Facilitate the development of a shared vision at department levels;
- 2) Use data to identify goals and assess instructional effectiveness;
- 3) Monitor progress in the alignment of curriculum, instruction and student assessment; and
- 4) Promote continuous improvement in teaching and learning at the university and department levels.

### **1.7.5 Development of Instructors**

The professional development of instructors has long been recognized as a priority issue of education reform. Professional development shall be comprised of professional learning opportunities aligned with student learning and improvement of instructors and university leaders' (J Qi, 2012).

### **1.7.6 Instructional Capacity**

Instructional capacity is the collection of resources for teaching needed to provide high quality instruction to groups of students in a specific context (Martha Feldman's, 2004).



## 1.8 Summary

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. This first chapter describes the focus, context, purpose, conceptual definition, significance of the study and limitations. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature on instructional leadership that informed the questions and the conceptual framework. Chapter Three describes the design of the study and presents the participants in the study. This chapter situates the study within the field of qualitative research. It includes a detailed description of the research procedures including the data gathering process, analyses, and credibility of the work, limitations, and ethical considerations. Chapter four presents the findings from the instructional leaders' interviews, the collected documents in a thematic format and discussion of findings, as they relate to the research questions and the implications for practice, research, and policy. Chapter Five provides the conclusions that I reached and suggests areas for further research.



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