

**DEVELOPING A MODEL OF  
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP WITH  
REFERENCE TO DIFFERENTIATED  
INSTRUCTION OF ENGLISH AT LIFE  
UNIVERSITY IN CAMBODIA**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to develop a model of instructional leadership to help students with low achievement of English to improve their English learning at Life University (LU) in Cambodia. This research had four objectives such as exploring instructional leadership; identifying the causes of low achievement of English; determining factors contributing to high achievement of English at LU in Cambodia; and developing a model of instructional leadership to enhance English learning at LU in Cambodia.

The questionnaire for students was made by integrating theories of motivation and attribution. The questionnaire for instructors was based on instructional leadership theory. The researcher administered the questionnaires to 286 students and 38 academic staff at LU in Cambodia.

The research findings about instructional leadership include that LU instructional leaders' behaviors were indirectly influencing student achievement; and they need to be more concerned about data gathering & assessment for student achievement. The research findings about English learning show that the causes of low achievement of English are negative attitudes toward learning English, attribution to ability, difficulty of the test, and mood on the day. The factors of high achievement of English are found in high integrative orientation in English, strong desire to learn English, positive attitude toward learning English, and attribution to their English grade to their effort.

After the analysis and the interpretation of the data, the findings were integrated and applied as the grounds of developing a model of instructional leadership to improve English learning through differentiated instruction.

**Keywords:** Instructional Leadership, Differentiated Instruction, Second Language Acquisition, Motivation, Attribution, Student Achievement

**Introduction**

LU was established in 2007 as a Christian private school in Sihanoukville, Cambodia. LU has four colleges with 50 staff and 535 students as of the 2011 academic year. LU has a clear goal to provide

students with an exceptional education through Christian education in order to participate in improving Cambodia's economy, industry, and future. With its short history, LU has young faculty members with limited previous teaching experience at the tertiary level. LU is in urgent need of instructional leadership which will focus on curriculum development, instructional practices, and teacher effectiveness.

Most instructors use a teacher-centered traditional method: they do most of the talking and learners have rare discussions in class. Most of them do not find any room to care for the low achievement students and just follow the syllabus to finish the courses. For assessment, instructors mainly rely on the results of mid-term exams and final exams. The present situation is ineffective in terms of student learning and requires enhanced instructional leadership to guide the teachers into the role of facilitator or team leader for effective learning.

The purpose of this research is to devise a good model of instructional leadership to enhance learning English with reference to differentiated instruction with the following objectives:

- To explore the instructional leadership in the education at Life University in Cambodia.
- To identify the causes of low achievement of English students at Life University in Cambodia.
- To determine factors contributing to high achievement of English students at Life University in Cambodia.
- To develop a model of instructional leadership to enhance English learning at Life University in Cambodia.

**Literature Review**

This research focused on the theories of learning and instructional leadership which is applied to Life University in Cambodia.

***Instructional Leadership***

Instructional leadership can be defined as those behaviors an educational leader takes or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning. In practice, this means that the university president encourages educational achievement by making instructional quality the top priority of the university and brings that vision to realization. In this research, principal skills checklist was used to discuss instructional leadership and student achievement (Richard, & Catano, 2008).

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### ***Differentiated Instruction***

The theory of differentiated instruction (DI), which is a way of thinking about teaching and learning, is crucial for this study. DI is a collection of strategies that help teacher's better address and manage the variety of learning needs in the classroom. DI promotes all students' learning by engaging them in activities that best respond to their particular learning needs, strengths, and preferences (Heacox, 2002).

Tomlinson (1999) examined school-level implementation of differentiated instruction and identified ways that instructional leaders can best support the practice of differentiated instruction. In this study, learner motivation and attribution were also regarded as important aspects of difference that fit into differentiated learning.

### ***Motivation and Attribution***

Effective teaching and learning depend upon motivated students; hence instructional leaders must know how to stimulate, direct, and maintain high levels of motivation among learners (Hoy & Hoy, 2009). In learning, low achievement is strongly related to motivation of students. It means that low achievement students have weak motivation for learning.

According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), there are two kinds of motivation: *integrative motivation*, which indicates positive attitudes and feelings toward the target language group, and *instrumental motivation*, which indicates the potential utilitarian gains of foreign language. It is a truism to state that if there is no motivation for learning, then there will be no learning. For the purpose of this research, however, the guiding assumption is that when students have no extrinsic or intrinsic goals for learning, they will lose motivation and stop learning.

Motivation is also affected by learners' beliefs about the causes of success and failures. The theory of attribution can help to explain the causes of high or low achievement. It is a very influential theory with implications for academic motivation. It emphasizes the idea that learners are strongly motivated by the pleasant outcome of being able to feel good about themselves (Weiner, 1980).

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Population**

The research population was 535 undergraduate students enrolled in the 2011-2012 academic year and 50 academic staff in Life University, Sihanoukville, Cambodia. There are nine departments in four faculties in Life University.

### **Sample**

The researcher used convenience sampling where subjects were selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to him. The samples consisted of students from nine departments out of four colleges. There were 286 participants with 29 English majors, 31 Korean majors, and 226 non-language majors. For instructional leadership survey, 38 instructors participated in the study as samples for gathering information about instructional leadership in Life University.

### **Research Instrument**

Two kinds of questionnaire are used in this research: one for students, and the other for instructors. The questionnaire for students consists of two parts: a demographic survey, and two scales measuring the two relevant variables of motivation and attribution. A demographics survey included age, gender, major, and other information. The two scales include Gardner's AMTB for assessing motivations of the learners by a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

The reliability of Gardner's AMTB was validated by his research and its Cronbach alpha was .85. And the Language Achievement Attribution Scale (LAAS) was used to assess the scale of attributions. The reliability of LAAS estimated by Cronbach Alpha was .846.

The questionnaire for instructional leadership was used to review and assess the instructors' concepts of instructional leadership. The questionnaire was based on the principal skills assessment checklists (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008). There were 6 subscales and 28 items in the questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire the demographic survey was included: age, gender, working years at LU and teaching experience

### **Collection of Data**

The researcher requested permission from the president and the vice-president of Life University before administering the questionnaires for instructors and students. The researcher visited the first and second year College English classes in every department. There were two streams of College English classes: CE1 for the first year and CE3 for the second year. CE1 was divided into three classes: Midwifery class (49 students), Midwifery & Nursing class (48 students), and a Combined class (66 students from 7 departments). CE3 was also divided into three classes: Midwifery class (34 students), Midwifery & Nursing class (33 students), and a Combined class (11 students from 2 departments only). The second year students of seven departments except civil

engineering and computer did not join the Combined class of College English.

### Data Analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaires was analyzed by utilizing Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) v.16. Descriptive statistics was employed to examine the normality of the distribution including means, frequencies, and standard deviations. To analyze the data for objective number 1: frequencies and percentages were used to determine the status of instructional leadership in the sample university.

The researcher used the individual score results on each of the 28 survey questions and computed an average individual rating for each of the 6 instructional leadership job functions. Then these scores were used to compute the mean scores for each job function needed to determine the most important perceived instructional leadership job function.

To identify the data for objective number 2 and 3: frequencies and percentages were computed to show the factors of low achievement and high achievement of English. Also, means and standard deviations were used to determine the factors of high achievement. To compare sets of data, crosstabs (one of SPSS function) were used. For example, crosstabs were useful to investigate the correlations between English test grades and the sub-scales of motivation for both low achievement and high achievement of English learning. After the analysis and the interpretation of the data, the findings were integrated and applied as the grounds of developing a model of differentiated English language learning.

### Research Findings

#### Research Objective 1: To explore the status of instructional leadership in the education at Life University in Cambodia.

There were 38 instructors who participated in the questionnaire about instructional leadership. The respondents of instructors' questionnaire are classified according to age, gender, working period at LU, and years of teaching experience.

- 44.7% of the respondents are below 30, and 21.1% are more than 60.
- 81.6% of the respondents are male, while 18.4% are female in LU.
- 50% of the respondents work at LU for less than a year. 21.1% of the respondents work at least 2-3 years. Only 7.9 % of the respondents had worked with their current school for more than 4 years.
- 31.6% of the instructors have teaching experiences of less than a year. And 21.1% of the respondents had more than 10 years of teaching

experience.

To explore the status of instructional leadership, the researcher examined what items LU instructional leaders do most and least from instructional leadership roles by means of instructors' questionnaire.

According to the survey, "behaviors indirectly influencing student achievement" was found to be the item what LU instructional leaders were most concerned about among the instructional leadership functions. On the other hand, "data gathering & assessment" was found to be the item LU instructional leaders were not concerned about among the instructional leadership functions.

The five items that make up the first section, learning community, were all conceptualized as indicators of the instructional leaders leading learning community. The meaning is that the instructional leaders "frequently" lead learning community.

The second section, data gathering & assessment, consists of three items. Item 6 mean that the instructional leaders "frequently" gather various types of data analysis. Item 8 also indicates that the instructional leaders "frequently" influence staff to use data to make instructional decisions instructional decisions.

The third section, curriculum & instruction monitoring contains five items, items 10, 12, 13 were concerned with teaching practices, in particular, monitoring teaching and learning. Item 12 show that the instructional leaders "sometimes" discusses teaching practices with individual staff members. Item 9 mean that the instructional leaders know good instructional practices associated with different subject areas. And item 11 means that the instructional leaders' model behavior expected of staff.

The fourth section, behaviors indirectly influencing student achievement, consists of six items. Items 14 and 16 had the largest mean scores of this survey. The range of mean scores was from 3.66 to 3.42, which indicates the top scores of the six factors. The six items all mean that the instructional leaders "frequently" make indirect influencing student achievement.

The fifth section, goal setting & student achievement, contains three items. Their mean scores range from 3.45 to 3.05. The three items all were concerned about student achievement. It means that the instructional leaders make decisions about school operations in terms of student academic goals.

The sixth section, using data to guide decision making, consists of six items. Item 25 means that the instructional leaders "sometimes" ensure that student progress data are used to make instructional decisions.

### *The Status of Instructional Leadership at LU*

● According to the instructors' survey, the respondents agreed that LU instructional leaders' behaviors were indirectly influencing student achievement. It emphasizes the importance of instructional leaders' behaviors concerning student achievement.

● On the other hand, the respondents suggested that LU instructional leaders should be more concerned about data gathering & assessment for student achievement.

### *Six Factors Related to Instructional Leadership at LU*

1) Leading learning community: The results of five items indicated that LU instructional leaders make student learning the centerpiece of any work at school.

2) Data gathering & assessment: In spite of the importance of data assessment in making instructional decisions, LU instructional leaders did not show any evidence to use data to determine school effectiveness for instructional decisions.

3) Curriculum & instruction monitoring: The items related with teaching practices showed low mean scores, which meant that the instructional leaders did not have a lot of chances to discuss teaching practices with individual teachers or visit classrooms to monitor teaching and learning.

4) Behaviors indirectly influencing student achievement: Two of six items had the largest mean scores of this survey. It meant that the instructional leaders focused on student learning and held high expectations of teachers and students.

5) Goal setting & student achievement: The result shows that LU instructional leaders need to make more decisions about school operations in terms of student academic goals.

6) Using data to guide decision making: This factor showed lower mean scores compared with other factors of instructional leadership. LU instructional leaders showed their weaknesses to use

data in both the second factor and the sixth factor. The second factor was about data about school effectiveness, and the sixth factor dealt with data about student achievement.

### **Research Objective 2: To identify the causes of low achievement of learning English at Life University in Cambodia.**

#### *Demographics of Students' Survey*

The description of the demographic characteristics of the 286 participants is as follows. Respondents were described by the following characteristics: school year, age, gender, major, English test grade, feelings about English learning, and family connection to English study. The characteristics of demographic data of students' questionnaire as follows:

● 39.2 % of participants are the first year students and 17.5 % of the participants are second year students who are studying College English now. 29.0% of participants are the third year students and 14.3% of participants are the fourth year students who finished studying College English.

● 57% of the respondents were below 20 years old.

● 69.6% of the respondents include the female students from midwifery and nursing.

● 65% of the respondents are the students from midwifery and nursing.

● 56.6 % of the respondents report that they have studied English for less than three years.

● 52.6% of the respondents reported that they had failed or managed to pass with low grade.

● 69.1% of the respondents reported 'satisfied', whereas only 4.2% reported 'unsatisfied' with 26.6% in neutral position.

● 19.6% of the respondents reported that their English study was connected with family background.

The mean scores and frequencies in the questionnaire are as follows:

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Motivation Survey**

	N	Mean	SD	Meaning
1. Integrative orientation	284	4.05	.808	SA
2. Interest in foreign languages	285	3.97	.815	A
3. Motivation intensity	285	3.59	.858	A
4. Desire to learn English	284	3.92	.844	A
5. Attitudes toward learning the language	284	2.99	.785	U
6. Instrumental orientation	285	3.88	.875	A
7. Language class anxiety	285	2.96	1.013	U
Average	285	3.62	.857	A

**Table 2: The Mean Scores and Frequencies**

Mean scores	Frequencies
0 – 1.00	Strongly Disagree (SD)
1.01 – 2.00	Disagree (D)
2.01 – 3.00	Undecided (U)
3.01 – 4.00	Agree (A)
4.01 – 5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)

There were many factors which were related with low achievement of English learning. One of the factors was found in Questions 40-44, Section 5 (Attitudes toward learning the language).

According to the survey, 79.73 % of the low achievement students showed negative attitude toward learning English.

Other factors which were related with low achievement of English learning were found in Questions 50-53, Section 7 (Language class anxiety). The survey shows that 56.08 % of the low achievement students had English language class anxiety.

Questions 55 & 57-60 about language attribution explain about the causes of low achievement of learning English. The survey shows that 56.55 % of the low achievement students attributed their English grades to various factors.

According to the survey, there were three important causes of low achievement of English students as follows:

1) Attitudes toward the language (Items 40-44): Low achievement students showed negative attitudes toward learning English.

2) Language class anxiety (Items 49-53): Low achievement students expressed English language class anxiety.

3) Language achievement attribution (Items 55, 57-60): Low achievement students attributed their English grades to various factors including their ability, the difficulty of the test, mood on the day of the test.

### **Research Objective 3: To determine factors contributing to high achievement of English students at Life University in Cambodia**

There are four factors which were related with high achievement of English learning. The first factor is found in Questions 1-4, Section 1. Integrative orientation. According to the survey, 90.14 % of the high achievement students had a high degree of integrative orientation in learning English.

The second factor is found in Questions 28, 31-34, Section 4. Desire to learn English. The survey shows that 86.84 % of the high achievement students had a strong desire to learn English.

The third factor is found in Questions 35-39,

Section 5 (Attitudes toward learning the language). The survey shows that 92.63 % of the high achievement students had a positive attitude toward learning English.

The fourth factor is found in Questions 54 & 56, Section 8 (LAAS). The survey shows that 72.22 % of the high achievement students attributed their English grade to their effort. In sum, there were four important factors contributing to high achievement of English students as follows.

1) Integrative orientation (Items 1-4): High achievement students had a high degree of integrative orientation in English.

2) Desire to learn English (Items 28, 31-34): High achievement students had a strong desire to learn English.

3) Attitudes toward learning the language (Items 35-39): This finding was the opposite of that of low achievement students in Items 40-44. High achievement students had a positive attitude toward learning English.

4) Language achievement attribution (Items 54 & 56): High achievement students attributed their English grade to their effort.

### **Research Objective 4: To develop a model of instructional leadership to enhance learning at Life University in Cambodia**

After the analysis and the interpretation of the data, the findings were integrated and applied as the grounds of developing a model of instructional leadership to improve English learning through differentiated instruction.

Although the instructional leadership of the university president was not directly related to student achievement, it did have an indirect positive effect on achievement according to the instructors' survey. The relationships among instructional leadership, motivation and attribution come together to form a model of instructional leadership with reference to differentiated instruction of English as shown in Figure 1.

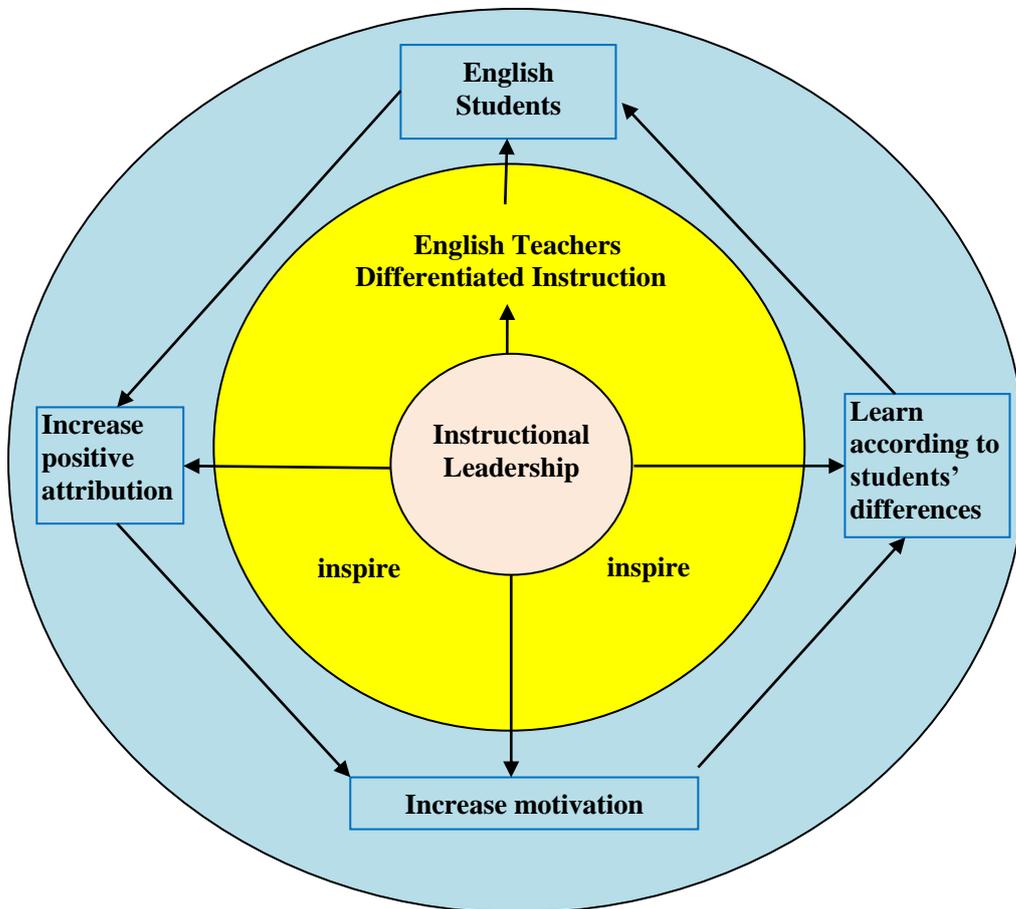
Instruction leadership plays the most important role in the center. Instructional leaders guide English teachers by providing in-service training for professional development focusing on differentiated instruction. As the findings suggest, instructional leaders indirectly influence English students' achievement by leading a learning community, e.g. using English all the time on campus. They inspire motivation from low achievement students as well as high achievement students through communication and encouragement.

Teachers can teach English through differentiated instruction and evaluate students' English learning through differentiated method

considering external attribution from low achievement students and internal attribution from high achievement students. As the model shows, English students increase positive attribution and motivation, and in the end they learn English according to their differences, e.g. learning styles or intelligences.

in reaching all students. The mission’s rationale is based on the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Differentiated instruction is a good learning strategy to reach all students with low achievement as well as high achievement.

Because LU is a small learning community, teachers and students work together to accomplish the



**Figure 1: A Model of Instructional Leadership with Reference to Differentiated Instruction of English at Life University in Cambodia**

**Conclusion**

In order to accomplish its goal to provide an excellent education through Christian spirit, Life University is in need of instructional leadership which will focus on student learning in the school. Instructional leaders must foster good school climate for learning by keeping simple things first, including protecting academic learning time. Now is the time to require enhanced instructional leadership to guide teachers into the role of facilitator or team leader for effective teaching.

From the study, the researcher made the conclusion that teachers can help students to arouse motivation in learning through differentiated instruction after understanding the learning theories. As the researcher mentioned before, the mission of a Christian school like Life University in Cambodia is

common goals of learning. The researcher as a teacher believes that there can be “no student left behind” in a small Christian school like LU in Cambodia.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Since this research focuses in a university in Cambodia only, the future research could expand the samples to higher education institutes in other countries which admit the importance of English language learning and the role of instructional leadership.

Because English is the official language of ASEAN, the importance of English learning cannot be over-emphasized. The value of the proposed model would be extended to other ASEAN countries, which will be unified by 2015. There will be likely much more cross-fertilization in colleges and universities

after 2015, so a great deal more research along these lines is called for.

In the present study, students' motivations and attributions were assessed solely based on the data gathered through questionnaires. Other researchers could add a qualitative component to this study (e.g. interview with students and teachers), which may give us more information about students' motivations and attributions. A combination of questionnaires and interview could be used by researchers in subsequent studies.

Although there are a lot of theories of language learning, this study has focused the theories of motivation, attribution, and differentiated instruction only. Such theories as multiple intelligences and learning styles could be used for future study.

The current study is a beginning not an end. It is a modest step trying to connect the instructional leadership behavior with the achievement of students.

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