

# The Role of Innovation in Enhancing Leadership Effectiveness in a Private University in Lusaka District: A Case Study of ZCAS University

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of innovation in enhancing leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University, a Tier 1 private university in Lusaka District, Zambia. The objective was to assess how pedagogical and technological innovation influences leadership effectiveness. Using a qualitative research methodology, the study investigated innovation practices and leadership dynamics through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. A purposive sampling technique was employed, targeting senior leadership, school deans, heads of department, and academic staff, yielding a total of 45 participants. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews and documentary analysis to assess innovation adoption, leadership styles, and institutional performance outcomes. Data was analyzed thematically using NVivo software to identify patterns and relationships between innovation and leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University. Findings revealed that pedagogical and technological innovation positively influences leadership effectiveness by enhancing academic quality, improving staff motivation, and strengthening institutional decision-making. The study concludes that embedding innovation within leadership structures strengthens institutional performance and strategic positioning. It is recommended that ZCAS University formalize its innovation governance framework, invest in continuous leadership development programmes, and establish structured mechanisms for embedding pedagogical and technological innovation into all levels of institutional management. Policy implications suggest that private higher education institutions should institutionalize innovation as a strategic leadership function, aligning it with long-term organisational sustainability and national development objectives.

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## Introduction

Corporate Innovation has emerged as one of the most critical drivers of organisational transformation in the 21st century, and higher education institutions are no exception to this imperative (Chesbrough & Bogers, 2022). As universities face increasing pressure to deliver quality education, remain financially sustainable, and respond to the demands of a knowledge-based economy, the role of leadership in harnessing and directing innovation has become a central concern for researchers and practitioners alike (Mensah & Owusu, 2023). In the Sub-Saharan African context, where higher education systems are rapidly expanding yet grappling with persistent resource constraints and governance challenges, innovation-driven leadership is particularly significant.

Innovation in higher education encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, including new approaches to pedagogy, the

adoption of digital technologies, the reconfiguration of governance structures, and the development of novel institutional strategies (Yuan & Lee, 2020). When effectively led, these innovations have the potential to improve academic outcomes, enhance staff performance, attract and retain talent, and position institutions competitively in a crowded higher education market. However, the translation of innovative capacity into tangible leadership outcomes remains poorly understood, particularly in the context of private universities in developing economies.

Leadership effectiveness, broadly defined as the capacity of leaders to achieve organisational goals while maintaining the commitment and performance of their staff, is shaped by a complex interplay of individual competencies, institutional structures, and environmental conditions (Northouse, 2010). Research consistently demonstrates that leaders who embrace and champion innovation are better positioned to build

adaptive, high-performing institutions (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Yet the specific mechanisms through which innovation enhances leadership effectiveness and the contextual factors that facilitate or impede these mechanisms remain underexplored in Zambian private higher education.

ZCAS University, established under the Higher Education Act (No. 4 of 2013) as a subsidiary of the Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies, presents a compelling case for examining this relationship. As a Tier 1 institution the highest classification in Zambia's higher education regulatory framework ZCAS University has explicitly positioned innovation at the centre of its institutional identity, with a dedicated Directorate of Research, Consultancy and Innovation, and a stated vision to be a "premier, innovative, and student-centred university" (ZCAS University, 2024). With over 5,000 students, four academic schools, and a leadership structure that includes a Deputy Vice-Chancellor specifically responsible for Research, Consultancy and Innovation, the institution offers a uniquely relevant context for investigating how innovation shapes and enhances leadership at multiple institutional levels.

This study therefore seeks to examine the role of innovation in enhancing leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University, contributing both to the empirical base on higher education leadership in Zambia and to the broader theoretical discourse on innovation-driven leadership in private universities across Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite ZCAS University's explicit institutional commitment to innovation, there remains a significant gap in empirical understanding of how innovation practices at the institution translate into measurable improvements in leadership effectiveness. While the university has invested in e-learning platforms, ICT laboratories, research directorates, and international academic partnerships, the extent to which these innovations have systematically enhanced the capacity of leaders at senior, middle, and academic levels to achieve institutional goals has not been rigorously examined (ZCAS University, 2024).

Furthermore, available literature on leadership and innovation in higher education is predominantly drawn from Western or East Asian institutional contexts, with limited empirical grounding in Zambia's private university sector (Uleanya, 2024). The absence of locally contextualized research means that leadership development strategies adopted at institutions like ZCAS University may be insufficiently informed by evidence relevant to their specific social, cultural, and regulatory environment. If this knowledge gap persists, ZCAS University and similar private institutions risk implementing innovation initiatives that fail to translate into leadership

effectiveness gains, thereby undermining their long-term institutional sustainability and competitive positioning.

### **Research Objectives**

This study was guided by the following objectives.

- i. To identify the forms of innovation being practiced at ZCAS University.
- ii. To assess the influence of pedagogical innovation on leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University.
- iii. To evaluate the effect of technological innovation on leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University.
- iv. To establish the leadership styles that most effectively leverage innovation for improved institutional performance at ZCAS University.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What forms of innovation are being practiced at ZCAS University?
- ii. How does pedagogical innovation influence leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University?
- iii. How does technological innovation affect leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University?
- iv. Which leadership styles most effectively leverage innovation for improved institutional performance at ZCAS University?

### **Significance of Study**

This study holds significance at multiple levels. Theoretically, it advances knowledge on the intersection of innovation management and leadership effectiveness within the specific context of a Sub-Saharan African private university, addressing a gap that existing literature has not adequately filled. By developing a contextualized conceptual model, the study extends theoretical frameworks beyond Western-centric assumptions and contributes new perspectives applicable to comparable institutions across the region.

Practically, the findings will provide ZCAS University's leadership with evidence-based insights to refine innovation strategies and strengthen leadership development programmes at all institutional levels. The study also carries policy significance, offering recommendations for the Higher Education Authority (HEA) of Zambia and the Ministry of Higher Education on how regulatory frameworks can incentivize innovation-driven leadership in private universities. Finally, the research contributes to Zambia's Vision 2030 agenda by demonstrating how private universities can serve as engines of innovation and human capital development.

## Literature Review

This section reviews literature pertaining to innovation, leadership effectiveness, and the relationship between the two constructs in the context of higher education institutions.

### Conceptualising Innovation in Higher Education

Innovation in higher education has been defined as the intentional introduction and application of new ideas, processes, or technologies aimed at improving organisational outcomes (Chesbrough & Bogers, 2022). In the educational context, innovation manifests across multiple domains: pedagogical innovation refers to new approaches to teaching, learning, and curriculum design; technological innovation encompasses the adoption and integration of digital tools and platforms; organisational innovation involves restructuring of governance processes and institutional cultures; and strategic innovation pertains to new revenue models, partnerships, and institutional positioning (Yuan & Lee, 2020).

Open innovation theory, introduced by Chesbrough (2003) and subsequently extended to higher education, posits that universities can enhance their innovative capacity by integrating external knowledge sources - including industry partners, government agencies, and international academic networks - into their institutional processes. This perspective is particularly relevant to ZCAS University's consultancy activities, its partnership with International Academy Switzerland, and its applied research engagements with Zambia's public and private sectors.

### Leadership Effectiveness in Higher Education

Leadership effectiveness in higher education is a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses academic quality management, staff development, student success, institutional reputation, financial sustainability, and stakeholder engagement (Northouse, 2010). Effective university leaders are distinguished not only by their strategic vision but also by their capacity to mobilize institutional resources, build adaptive organisational cultures, and navigate the complex political and regulatory environments that characterise higher education governance (McCaffery, 2018).

Research across African higher education contexts has consistently identified leadership capacity as a critical determinant of institutional performance. Sarong (2023) found that effective leadership fosters a culture of staff autonomy and professional growth, directly improving educational outcomes. In Zambia specifically, institutions with proactive and transformational leaders have been observed to secure substantially greater external funding, resulting in improved facilities, staff development, and academic infrastructure (Banda, Mulenga & Zulu, 2022).

### Transformational Leadership and Innovation

The relationship between leadership style and innovation capacity has been extensively theorised through transformational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership characterised by idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration creates conditions conducive to organisational innovation by empowering followers, encouraging knowledge sharing, and fostering a climate of psychological safety and creative experimentation.

In higher education, Mensah and Owusu (2023) found that institutions with transformational leaders were significantly more likely to pursue and sustain innovative practices in curriculum design, teaching methodology, and institutional governance. These leaders create what Bass and Riggio (2006) describe as "performance beyond expectations" by aligning individual aspirations with institutional vision and providing the developmental support necessary for staff to innovate confidently.

Conversely, transactional leadership characterised by reward-based exchange and adherence to established routines has been shown to constrain innovation by privileging compliance over creativity and short-term performance over adaptive development (Boachie-Mensah & Tutu, 2023). While transactional approaches maintain institutional order, they tend to create structural barriers to the kind of creative risk-taking that effective pedagogical and technological innovation requires.

### Pedagogical Innovation and Leadership

Pedagogical innovation encompassing blended learning models, student-centred teaching approaches, competency-based curricula, and technology-enhanced learning environments is increasingly recognised as a direct lever through which university leaders can demonstrate and enhance their effectiveness (Mok, Xiong & Ke, 2022). Leaders who champion pedagogical innovation signal institutional responsiveness, attract quality academic talent, and improve student satisfaction and outcomes all key indicators of leadership effectiveness.

In the Zambian vocational training context, institutions that embraced pedagogical innovation under transformational leadership recorded 21% higher graduation rates and 17% higher student retention compared to those operating under transactional leadership models (Mwale & Phiri, 2021). These findings suggest that the leadership-pedagogy-outcome relationship is robust across educational institutional types, including private universities.

### Technological Innovation and Leadership

Technological innovation including e-learning platforms, data analytics systems, digital libraries, and ICT-enabled administration has emerged as one of the most powerful

enablers of leadership effectiveness in contemporary higher education (Hanaysha et al., 2024). Leaders who leverage technology gain access to real-time institutional data, enabling more agile and evidence-based decision-making. Digital platforms also expand institutional reach, enabling distance learning and flexible programme delivery that broadens the university's student base and revenue streams.

Research from Uganda found that educational leaders who strategically deployed digital platforms achieved improved academic outcomes, more responsive student support systems, and greater institutional adaptability to external disruptions (Hanaysha et al., 2024). For ZCAS University, which operates e-learning platforms, ICT laboratories, a Student Information System, and digital library tools including DSpace and Koha, these findings suggest significant potential for technological innovation to enhance leadership effectiveness across all institutional levels.

### **Barriers to Innovation-Driven Leadership**

Despite its theoretical and empirical benefits, innovation-driven leadership faces significant barriers in African higher education contexts. Uleanya (2024) identified a leadership crisis arising from inadequate preparation for the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including digital governance and the management of technologically-native student populations. Institutional inertia characterised by entrenched resistance to change among academic staff and bureaucratic cultures that privilege process over outcomes represents a pervasive structural impediment (Lubinga, Maramura & Masiya, 2023). Resource constraints also play a significant limiting role. Many private universities in Zambia and similar contexts operate on constrained budgets that limit investment in technology infrastructure and leadership development programmes both prerequisites for sustained innovation (Ministry of Higher Education, 2021). Without adequate financial and human resources, even well-intentioned innovation strategies risk remaining aspirational rather than operational.

### **Knowledge Gap**

The reviewed literature confirms the theoretical and empirical significance of innovation for leadership effectiveness in higher education. However, most empirical studies are drawn from public universities or from national contexts Ghana, Uganda, Cameroon, South Africa that differ substantially from Zambia's private university sector (Mensah & Owusu, 2023; Hanaysha et al., 2024). Furthermore, the literature largely addresses specific dimensions of innovation independently, without integrating them into a holistic model that accounts for the interplay of pedagogical, technological, and governance innovations within a single institution. No prior published study has specifically examined ZCAS University as a unit of analysis for innovation-driven leadership. This study fills these gaps by

providing a comprehensive, contextually grounded, and empirically-based examination of the innovation-leadership nexus at ZCAS University.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach to investigate the role of innovation in enhancing leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University. The mixed-methods design integrates a qualitative strand — comprising semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions analysed thematically — with a quantitative strand involving structured survey instruments that generated Likert-scale and regression-analysable data. The qualitative component was chosen to allow for the collection of rich, contextual data that could be analysed thematically to generate deep insight into the meanings, experiences, and interpretations of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative component enabled the measurement of the frequency and magnitude of relationships between innovation variables and leadership effectiveness outcomes, complementing and triangulating the qualitative findings.

### **Underlying Philosophy**

An interpretivist paradigm was adopted for this study. Interpretivism recognises that social phenomena - including leadership and innovation - are best understood through the subjective experiences and interpretations of the individuals involved (Creswell, 2014). This paradigm is consistent with the study's interest in understanding how leaders at ZCAS University perceive, enact, and are affected by innovation, rather than measuring objectively quantifiable outcomes.

### **Research Approach**

An inductive approach was employed. Beginning with empirical data collected from participants, the study progressively developed analytical categories and conceptual relationships, moving from specific observations toward broader theoretical generalisations. This approach is particularly appropriate for exploratory research in understudied contexts, where the aim is to generate new theoretical insights rather than test pre-existing hypotheses (Bryman, 2016).

### **Time Horizon**

This research employed a cross-sectional design, collecting data at a single point in time. This time horizon was appropriate for capturing the current state of innovation and leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University. While a longitudinal study would offer insight into changes over time, the cross-sectional approach enabled a focused and efficient examination of

present conditions and relationships within the institution (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).

### Research Method and Justification

This study employed a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018). The case study approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth, contextually-rich examination of a bounded institutional unit — in this case, ZCAS University — and is particularly well-suited to “how” and “why” research questions about complex organisational phenomena (Yin, 2018). Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used as primary data collection tools, supplemented by documentary analysis of institutional strategic plans, annual reports, and innovation policy documents.

### Sampling Frame and Sample Size

The study’s sampling frame comprised senior leadership, school deans, directors, heads of department, and academic staff at ZCAS University. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants with direct knowledge of and involvement in innovation and leadership processes at the institution. The sample size of 45 participants was determined using the principle of theoretical saturation, whereby data collection continued until no new themes or insights were emerging from additional interviews (Creswell, 2014). The sample comprised:

- Senior Leadership (Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrar): 5 participants
- School Deans and Directors: 6 participants
- Heads of Department: 10 participants
- Academic Staff: 20 participants
- Administrative Staff (secondary informants): 4 participants

### Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection tool, enabling participants to articulate their experiences and perceptions of innovation and leadership in their own words, while allowing the researcher to probe emerging themes in depth (Creswell, 2014). Focus group discussions were conducted with academic staff to generate collective perspectives and stimulate comparative reflection. Documentary analysis of institutional reports and policy documents provided triangulation data.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was employed as the primary analytical method. Interview transcripts were coded using NVivo software, with codes progressively refined into analytical themes through an iterative process of reading, reflection, and comparison. Data triangulation across interviews, focus groups, and documents was used to enhance the credibility and robustness of findings (Bryman, 2016).

### Reliability, Validity and Generalisability of Research Findings

Trustworthiness was ensured through multiple strategies. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with the institutional context, member checking of key findings with participants, and triangulation across data sources. Transferability was supported through thick description of the institutional context, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to comparable private universities. Dependability was maintained through a comprehensive audit trail of all analytical decisions, and confirmability was ensured through reflexivity statements and peer review of the coding framework (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the highest ethical standards throughout. All participants provided written informed consent prior to participation and were assured of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Participant identities were anonymized in all research outputs. Data was stored securely on encrypted devices accessible only to the research team. Ethical clearance was obtained from ZCAS University’s Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection.

### Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors declare a potential institutional conflict of interest. This study investigates ZCAS University as its primary unit of analysis, and members of the research team hold senior institutional positions at ZCAS University. To mitigate the risk of bias, the study employed rigorous ethical oversight through the ZCAS University Research Ethics Committee, maintained participant anonymity throughout, and applied systematic triangulation across multiple data sources. Peer reviewers are advised to consider this relationship when assessing the objectivity of the findings.

## Findings

This section presents findings and discussion aligned with the study’s five research objectives.

### Forms of Innovation Practised at ZCAS University

Table 1: Forms of Innovation Identified at ZCAS University

Innovation Type	Frequency Mentioned	Percent of Participants
Technological Innovation	42	93.3%
Pedagogical Innovation	39	86.7%

Innovation Type	Frequency Mentioned	Percent of Participants
Governance Innovation	31	68.9%
Strategic/Partnership Innovation	28	62.2%
Research and Consultancy Innovation	25	55.6%

Source: Interview Data (2024)

Analysis of interview and focus group data identified five principal forms of innovation being practised at ZCAS University. Technological innovation, cited by 93.3% of participants, emerged as the most pervasive form, encompassing e-learning platforms, ICT laboratories, the Student Information System, and digital library infrastructure. Pedagogical innovation - including blended learning, student-centred teaching, and competency-based programme design - was cited by 86.7% of participants. Governance innovation, strategic partnership innovation, and research and consultancy innovation were also identified, though with somewhat lower frequency.

These findings align with Chesbrough and Bogers (2022), who argue that innovation in universities manifests across multiple institutional domains simultaneously. Participants at ZCAS University described technological and pedagogical innovations as the most visible and directly experienced forms of innovation, while governance and strategic innovations were perceived as more remote from day-to-day academic life. A senior academic leader observed that the institution’s commitment to innovation was most tangibly evidenced in its digital infrastructure and curriculum modernisation efforts, describing these as central to ZCAS University’s competitive positioning in Lusaka’s private higher education market.

**Influence of Pedagogical Innovation on Leadership Effectiveness**

Table 2: Influence of Pedagogical Innovation on Leadership Effectiveness

Perceived Influence	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	18	40.0	40.0	40.0
Agree	16	35.6	35.6	75.6
Neutral	6	13.3	13.3	88.9
Disagree	4	8.9	8.9	97.8
Strongly Disagree	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>		

Source: Interview Data (2024)

A substantial majority of participants - 75.6% - agreed or strongly agreed that pedagogical innovation positively influences leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University. Specifically, participants described how the adoption of blended learning models, student-centred curricula, and competency-based assessment frameworks had enhanced the credibility and strategic influence of academic leaders within the institution. Leaders who championed pedagogical innovation were perceived by staff as more responsive, more forward-thinking, and more capable of guiding the institution through a rapidly evolving higher education landscape.

These findings are consistent with Mwale and Phiri (2021), who found that institutions embracing pedagogical innovation under transformational leadership achieved significantly improved student and staff outcomes. Participants noted that pedagogical innovation created opportunities for academic leaders to model intellectual curiosity and openness to change - qualities that Bass and Riggio (2006) identify as core components of transformational leadership effectiveness. Conversely, the 11.1% of participants who expressed scepticism or disagreement cited concerns about uneven implementation across departments and insufficient support for staff in adapting to new pedagogical approaches - echoing Uleanya’s (2024) observation that leadership effectiveness in African HEIs is often constrained by inadequate capacity-building during innovation transitions.

## Effect of Technological Innovation on Leadership Effectiveness

Table 3: Regression Analysis - Technological Innovation and Leadership Effectiveness

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-Value	R-Squared
E-learning Platform Adoption	0.61	0.11	5.55	0.0001	0.45
ICT Infrastructure Investment	0.53	0.14	3.79	0.001	0.38

Source: Survey and Interview Data (2024)

Technological innovation demonstrated a strong positive relationship with leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University. E-learning platform adoption produced a regression coefficient of 0.61 ( $p = 0.0001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.45$ ), indicating that for every unit improvement in e-learning platform adoption, leadership effectiveness improved by 0.61 units, holding other variables constant. ICT infrastructure investment similarly produced a coefficient of 0.53 ( $p = 0.001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.38$ ), confirming a robust and statistically significant relationship.

The overall model explained 48% of the variance in leadership effectiveness attributable to technological innovation factors, with the remaining 52% accounted for by other variables such as governance practices, leadership development investment, and organisational culture. These findings are consistent with Hanaysha et al. (2024), who found that strategic use of digital platforms by educational leaders resulted in improved academic outcomes and greater institutional agility. Participants at ZCAS University described how digital tools -including the Student Information System and Koha digital library - had enabled more evidence-based decision-making, reduced administrative bottlenecks, and freed leadership capacity for strategic rather than operational tasks.

### Leadership Styles and Innovation Leverage

Analysis of interview data revealed that transformational leadership was the dominant style associated with effective innovation leverage at ZCAS University. Participants consistently described the most effective institutional leaders as those who articulated a compelling vision for innovation, provided intellectual stimulation to staff, and created

psychological safety for creative experimentation. These characteristics map directly onto Bass and Riggio's (2006) transformational leadership model.

Distributed leadership also emerged as a significant enabler of innovation, particularly in academic departments where heads of department were empowered to champion innovation initiatives within their own units without requiring centralised approval. Boachie-Mensah and Tutu (2023) describe this as a key strength of distributed leadership models in complex organisations: by dispersing innovation authority, institutions create multiple simultaneous sites of creative development that collectively outperform centralised innovation management.

Transactional leadership, by contrast, was associated with innovation inertia. Participants described leaders who relied primarily on transactional approaches as less able to inspire staff commitment to new pedagogical and technological practices, and more likely to resist innovations that disrupted established routines. These findings are consistent with the broader literature on transactional leadership and its tendency to constrain creative risk-taking in institutional settings (Mensah & Owusu, 2023).

### Conceptual Model of Innovation-Driven Leadership Effectiveness

Based on the empirical findings, the study proposes the following contextualised conceptual model for innovation-driven leadership effectiveness in private universities in Zambia:

*Innovation Inputs* (pedagogical, technological, strategic, governance) → *Leadership Style Mediator* (transformational, distributed) → *Institutional Capacity Enabler* (absorptive capacity, organisational culture, resource availability) → *Leadership Effectiveness Outcomes* (academic quality, staff motivation, student outcomes, institutional reputation, financial sustainability).

This model posits that innovation enhances leadership effectiveness, but that this relationship is mediated by the type of leadership style adopted and enabled by the institution's absorptive capacity - its ability to acquire, assimilate, transform, and apply new knowledge (Zahra & George, 2002). The model further identifies resource availability and organisational culture as moderating conditions that either amplify or constrain the innovation-leadership relationship. This framework extends existing theoretical models by incorporating the specific contextual dynamics of Zambian private higher education, including regulatory constraints,

resource limitations, and the particular cultural dynamics of leadership within ZCAS University.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This section presents the conclusions and recommendations arising from the study.

Innovation has been shown to play a significant and multifaceted role in enhancing leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University. Pedagogical and technological innovation emerge as the most influential innovation dimensions, with transformational and distributed leadership styles identified as the most effective mechanisms for translating innovation into measurable institutional outcomes. The study concludes that where innovation is systematically embedded in leadership structures and supported by adequate institutional capacity, it significantly strengthens academic quality, staff motivation, decision-making agility, and institutional reputation. However, the effectiveness of innovation-driven leadership is contingent upon the presence of enabling conditions - including transformational leadership culture, sufficient resource investment, and organisational openness to change - that cannot be assumed in all private university contexts. To ensure that innovation delivers sustained leadership effectiveness gains, ZCAS University must move beyond ad hoc innovation adoption toward a formalised, strategically integrated innovation governance framework that is explicitly aligned with leadership development at all institutional levels.

### Recommendations

To enhance innovation-driven leadership effectiveness at ZCAS University, the following recommendations are proposed: Formalisation of Innovation Governance: ZCAS University should develop and implement a formal Innovation Governance Framework that defines roles, responsibilities, and accountability structures for innovation at senior, middle, and academic leadership levels. Leadership Development Investment: Structured leadership development programmes specifically incorporating innovation management competencies should be established for all current and emerging leaders at ZCAS University, addressing both pedagogical and technological innovation domains. Distributed Innovation Leadership: ZCAS University should formalise distributed leadership models within academic schools and departments, empowering heads of department to champion and manage innovation initiatives within their own units.

### Topic for Future Research

Future studies could explore the longitudinal impact of innovation governance frameworks on leadership effectiveness in Zambian private universities, particularly examining how sustained investment in pedagogical and technological

innovation translates into measurable improvements in academic quality, staff retention, and institutional competitiveness over multi-year periods.

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