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Factors Hindering Effective Implementation of Participatory Leadership Practices in Public Primary Schools: A Case of Morogoro District Council, Tanzania

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Abstract: **This study was conducted to explore the factors hindering effective implementation of participatory leadership practices in public primary schools in Morogoro District Council, Tanzania. The study was guided by Likert's Participative Leadership Theory and used a pragmatic research philosophy and convergent mixed-method approach. The population consisted of 1,060 teachers, 170 Heads of Schools and 31 Ward Education Officers. A sample of 117 respondents was selected, consisting of 91 teachers, 17 Heads of Schools and 9 Ward Education Officers. Quantitative data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis and then analyzed thematically. Six main challenges were identified, namely the lack of time for consultation, heavy teacher workload, insufficient consideration of teachers' views, poor communication between Heads of Schools and teachers, insufficient opportunities for teachers to participate in leadership responsibilities and lack of leadership support. Amongst these challenges, insufficient opportunities for participation had the highest mean score (M = 3.35, SD = 1.311) followed by lack of leadership support (M = 3.24, SD = 1.311), poor communication (M = 3.24, SD = 1.328), heavy teacher workload (M = 3.23, SD = 1.292), lack of consultation time (M = 3.21, SD = 1.304) and insufficient consideration of teachers' views (M = 3.14, SD = 1.234). Findings from qualitative and documentary analysis indicated that all these challenges were interrelated and sustained by staffing problems, competing administrative tasks, inequitable distribution of leadership responsibilities and insufficient professional development. The study concluded that participative leadership practices in public primary schools were inhibited not so much by the absence of formal participatory arrangements as by the organizational environment surrounding their implementation. Thus, addressing staffing and workload planning issues, communication, consultation process, leadership development and fair distribution of leadership responsibilities would facilitate teacher participation.**

Keywords: **School leadership, Participatory leadership, participatory leadership practices.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective school leadership has become an indispensable component of school effectiveness as it allows coordinating teachers, managing institutional resources and responding to administrative needs. The modern leadership approaches emphasize the aspects of collaboration and teacher participation instead of making decisions on an autocratic manner. Participative leadership can be very useful in this regard as it gives teachers the opportunity to contribute to school planning, decision-making, problem-solving and the implementation of school programs.

The implementation of participative leadership practices cannot be considered just as creation of some participative structures. The effectiveness of participation largely depends on the organizational environment where these processes occur. In particular, teachers need sufficient time for participation, reasonable workload, availability of information, participation in leadership tasks and the assurance that their opinions will be taken into account. In turn, school leaders also need enough support, leadership skills and resources in order to organize the processes of participation successfully. Thus, the weak organizational environment may lead to the ineffective participation.

Some international experience shows how important organizational conditions are in terms of teacher participation. Thus, in Finland, teachers work in an educational environment where there are professional autonomy, collaboration and participation in school development. However, the aspect of workload remains crucial. The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey emphasizes the significance of professional relationships and collaboration between teachers, showing that participation is inseparably connected with the organizational environment of schools (OECD, 2025). Similar experience in England also shows that teachers suffer from the load connected with lesson planning, assessment, data recording and other administrative duties that leave no time for participation in other activities (Department for Education [DfE], 2023). It means that the participative leadership should be combined with reasonable workload arrangements.

The situation becomes especially relevant for African education systems where the growth in the number of pupils leads to the increase in the work of teachers. For instance, in Kenya and Uganda, the expansion of primary education created additional pressure for teachers through increased enrolments, staffing problems and multiple tasks (Ministry of Education Kenya, 2021; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2021). In this case, participation in school management may become an extra task rather than an activity facilitated by the decrease in other work.

However, participative approaches are recognized as an important tool for the development of school leadership in East Africa. Onguko et al. (2021) highlight participatory approaches to school improvement, in particular through shared responsibility and stakeholder participation. The idea is that teachers have professional knowledge that can improve school-level decisions if teachers are provided with appropriate opportunities. However, some evidence from the region also shows that participation is limited by the inequitable distribution of leadership responsibilities, lack of mentorship and insufficient institutional support.

In Tanzania, the policy framework supports the role of stakeholder participation and collaboration in educational management. The Education and Training Policy of 2014 emphasizes participation, collaboration and effective school leadership in improving the educational quality (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2023). However, the implementation of participative leadership is taking place in the framework of an education system burdened with many administrative and instructional demands. Expansion of primary education led to the increase in demands for teachers and educational resources, while teachers have to perform teaching, assessment, record-keeping, meetings, committee work, supervision and other school duties (URT, 2022).

The situation is especially relevant for the public primary schools in Morogoro District Council. There are public primary schools functioning under the conditions of staff shortage, increased administrative responsibilities and scarce instructional resources. Thus, teachers may be expected to participate in school management while performing other instructional duties. Under such conditions, participation in leadership can compete with lesson preparation, classroom teaching and learner assessment.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teacher overload is being seen as the major problem that decreases the effectiveness of the implementation of participative leadership practices in many public primary schools in Tanzania, especially in rural areas. Thus, despite the amount of research on the topic, there are still some gaps in it. In particular, most researches focus on secondary schools rather than on public primary schools, especially in Tanzania. Previous studies also investigate the participative leadership in relation to the teacher satisfaction, commitment or overall school effectiveness rather than concentrate on organizational obstacles that impede the effective implementation of participative leadership. This study intends to explore the challenges hindering the effectiveness implementation of participative leadership practices in public primary schools in Morogoro District Council.

3. RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the factors hindering effective implementation of participatory leadership practices in public primary schools in Morogoro District Council?

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on Participative Leadership theory. The theory was developed by Rensis Likert (Likert, 1967). In the educational environment, participative leadership ensures teamwork of school principals, teachers and other stakeholders. The theory promotes teamwork, collaboration and joint decision-making for the achievement of educational goals.

The theoretical framework is highly relevant to the current research study helps to explore the challenges hindering the effectiveness implementation of participative leadership practices in public primary schools. Participative leadership contributes to the creation of positive school culture where teachers feel free to express their opinions and concerns. The theory allows creating effective teacher relationships that become the tool of improving teachers' performance. Being appreciated in their contribution, teachers become more motivated and committed to their work. The theory is consistent with the current educational reforms in Tanzania that emphasize decentralization, participation, and school-based management. With the help of participative leadership, school heads will be able to improve school quality assurance measures that will positively influence teachers' performance in public primary schools.

5. REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

This section reviews empirical studies on factors hindering the effective implementation of participatory leadership practices in public primary schools. The review draws on studies conducted in different educational contexts to establish the organizational, institutional, leadership, and resource-related factors that influence teachers' participation in school decision-making, delegation of responsibilities, and shared monitoring activities. Particular attention is given to evidence from international, African, and Tanzanian contexts.

Research shows that time is an obstacle to participative leadership. In Spain, Galdames-Calderón (2023) in his study on distributed leadership and school principals' practices in promoting teachers' professional development for school improvement argues that school leaders may support teacher participation and, at the same time, have insufficient time for collaboration. This barrier hinders the implementation of effective participative leadership practices in schools.

In Finland, Ahtiainen and Heikonen (2023) examined leadership groups as a mechanism for teacher participation and leadership distribution in comprehensive schools. The study found that organizational structure and inequitable participation may inhibit the effectiveness of leadership groups. These findings show that the participation requires the conscious organizational scheduling rather than relying on teachers' discretionary time.

In Ethiopia, Kene et al. (2021) conducted a study on challenges of effective principals' leadership in school improvement in government secondary schools. The study identified insufficient institutional support and lack of leadership development as barriers to collaborative leadership. Teachers need guidance, encouragement, feedback and recognition before assuming leadership responsibilities.

In Kenya, Kosgei and Edabu (2023) conducted a study on Head teachers' participative leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction in public primary schools in Baringo sub-country. The study found that the inequitable distribution of leadership responsibilities and lack of mentorship can inhibit the participative leadership. When leadership responsibilities are regularly allocated to a few experienced teachers, other teachers have little opportunity to develop leadership skills and confidence.

Amos et al. (2022) in their study of influence of delegation of responsibility in participative leadership style on improving the quality of education in public secondary schools in Arusha region, Tanzania. The study found that the delegation of responsibility promotes shared leadership, accountability and teacher commitment in Tanzanian public secondary schools. However, the study showed that delegated teachers do not always have corresponding decision-making authority and leadership responsibilities are concentrated amongst experienced teachers. It means the difference between delegation as allocation of tasks and participation as involvement in decision-making.

Mbogela and Kanukisya (2021) conducted a study on the participation of female teachers in educational leadership in secondary schools in Ubungo Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The study found that teacher participation in educational leadership was influenced by such factors as lack of confidence, lack of leadership training, lack of mentorship and gender stereotypes. It means that participation can be limited not only by organizational structure but also by access to the leadership development.

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Chiwamba and Kigobe (2022) in their study of challenges encounterd by school Heads in carrying out instructional supervisory activities in public secondary schools in Lindi, Tanzania. The study revealed that heads of schools had multiple administrative responsibilities, insufficient leadership training, poor communication skills, negative attitudes towards supervision and the challenge of supervising many teachers. It can limit the ability of school heads to conduct regular communication with teachers.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The pragmatic research philosophy, mixed research methods and a convergent design of mixed methods were used. The research has been carried out in public primary schools of Morogoro District Council, Tanzania. The population of the research included 1,261 respondents: 1,060 teachers, 170 Heads of Schools and 31 Ward Education Officers. The sample size consisted of 117 respondents: 91 teachers, 17 Heads of Schools and 9 Ward Education Officers. Teachers were selected randomly, while Heads of Schools and Ward Education Officers were selected purposefully because of their specific leadership, supervisory and administrative roles.

Three methods of data collection have been used including questionnaires, interviews and documents review. The questionnaire and interview guides were reviewed by research experts from Jordan University College regarding the clarity, relevance, consistency and appropriateness of the research instruments**.** Quantitative responses to the questionnaire were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations and qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed thematically by detecting common patterns, organizing them in themes and combining them with quantitative results. Documents review was used to corroborate the findings obtained from questionnaires and interviews. Ethical considerations were considered especially informed consent, voluntary participation of respondents, confidentiality and anonymity, respect, and anti-plagiarism.

7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings are presented, interpreted, and discussed in the context of examining the factors hindering the effective implementation of participatory leadership practices in public primary schools in Morogoro District Council, Tanzania. The study integrated quantitative data collected from teachers with qualitative data obtained from Heads of Schools and Ward Education Officers through interviews and documents review. The findings provide empirical evidence on the institutional, leadership, administrative, and resource-related factors that constrain teachers' effective participation in school decision-making, delegation of responsibilities, and shared monitoring activities. The quantitative findings are presented using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, while qualitative findings are presented thematically and supported by relevant respondents' views. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges affecting the implementation of participatory leadership practices in public primary schools. The following table presents teachers' responses on factors hindering the effective implementation of participatory leadership practices.

Table 1: Teachers' Responses on the Factors Hindering the Effective Implementation of Participatory Leadership Practices

Statement	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	S. Dev
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Limited time for consultation hinders my participation in school decision-making.	13	14.3	14	15.4	21	23.1	27	29.7	16	17.6	**3.21**	**1.304**
Heavy teacher workload limits my participation in school leadership activities.	11	12.1	17	18.7	20	22.0	26	28.6	17	18.7	**3.23**	**1.292**
The head teacher does not always consider my views when making important school decisions.	13	14.3	12	13.2	27	29.7	27	29.7	12	13.2	**3.14**	**1.234**

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Poor communication between the head teacher and teachers limits participative leadership in my school.	11	12.1	19	20.9	17	18.7	25	27.5	19	20.9	**3.24**	**1.328**
Insufficient opportunities for me to participate in leadership responsibilities hinder participative leadership practices in my school.	11	12.1	13	14.3	21	23.1	25	27.5	21	23.1	**3.35**	**1.311**
Lack of support from school leadership discourages me from participating in school decision-making.	13	14.3	13	14.3	21	23.1	27	29.7	17	18.7	**3.24**	**1.311**

Note: ***n*** **=** 91, **SD** = Strong Disagree, **D** = Disagree, **N**= Neutral, **A**=Agree, **SA**=Strong Agree, **f**=Frequency, **%**= Percentage; **S. Dev** =Standard Deviation

Source: Field Data (2026)

The data indicate that all six challenges obtained mean scores above the neutral midpoint of the five-point scale. Insufficient opportunities for participation obtained the highest mean score (M = 3.35, SD = 1.311), followed by poor communication and lack of leadership support (M = 3.24 each), heavy workload (M = 3.23), limited consultation time (M = 3.21) and inadequate consideration of teachers' views (M = 3.14). Thus, the challenge is multidimensional rather than being due to a single factor.

Limited Time for Consultation

Limited time for consultation was identified as one of the main barriers to teacher participation in school decision-making. 43 (47.3%) teachers, agreed that limited consultation time hindered their participation, while 27 (29.7%) teachers disagreed and 21 (23.1%) teachers remained neutral with a mean score of 3.21 and standard deviation of 1.304.

This suggests that consultation is competing with the immediate requirements of school administration. School leaders have to deal with students' discipline, changes in timetables, staff-related issues, exams, meetings and other administrative problems. At the same time, teachers have teaching responsibilities, departmental duties, assessment activities, committee responsibilities, supervision and co-curricular activities.

This quantitative data was supported of one of the Heads of Schools during interview:

"Sometimes there are issues that require immediate actions. It is not easy to consult all teachers before implementation. The situations regarding students' discipline, changes in timetables, unforeseen staff-related issues or other school issues require immediate reaction from the Head of School. In this case, waiting for consultation with all teachers may cause delays and negatively affect the operation of the school." (HOS 4, Interview, May 2026).

This illustrates the contradiction between participative decision-making and the demands of school administration. Participative leadership requires consultation, but school administration also involves decisions that cannot always be delayed. Consequently, Heads of Schools have to make immediate decisions if the circumstances require so.

Similarly, One of the Ward Education Officers supported:

"Even if the Head Teachers make efforts to involve teachers in decision-making, limited time caused by the numerous activities in schools often prevents sufficient consultation. Teachers have teaching responsibilities, departmental duties, committee meetings, supervision, assessment, co-curricular activities, etc., which make it difficult to organize consultations." (WEO 05, Interview, May 2026).

Thus, the qualitative data demonstrates that consultation is limited not because school leaders do not want to collaborate with teachers, but because the organizational timetable leaves little room for collective discussions. The finding is consistent with the findings of Galdames-Calderón (2023), who identified lack of time for collaboration as a barrier to distributed leadership. The result is also consistent with the theory of Likert's Participative Leadership Theory. Participative leadership implies that there should be sufficient opportunities for employees to contribute to organizational decisions. Where time for interaction is limited, the opportunities for meaningful participation are also limited. The implication is that participative

leadership cannot depend on leaders' desire to consult alone; schools should have institutionalized consultation processes working within the school timetable.

Heavy Teachers' Workload

Heavy teachers' workload has also been identified as one of the main barriers to participation. According to teachers' responses from questionnaires, 43 (47.3%) teachers agreed that heavy workload limited their participation in school leadership activities, while 28 (30.8%) disagreed and 20 (22.0%) were neutral with a mean score of 3.23 and standard deviation of 1.292.

This implies that teachers have many responsibilities including lesson preparation, teaching, assessment, marking, records keeping, meetings, committee activities, supervision, co-curricular activities and administrative assignments. Where there is insufficient staffing, the workload is increased among existing teachers. In the broader research, it was found that participative leadership itself creates additional responsibilities when teachers are given committee, departmental and coordination roles. This creates a paradox: participative leadership aims at distribution of organizational responsibility, but where there is insufficient staffing, participation can increase the number of duties performed by an individual teacher.

The quantitative data were corroborated with one Head of School who said:

"We have shortage of teachers, so the available teachers have to teach many periods in each week. Due to heavy workload, it becomes difficult to involve all teachers in meetings and leadership activities without affecting classroom instructions. At times teachers have to miss or postpone some participative activities because they require sufficient time for lesson preparation, marking, assessment and classroom teaching." (HOS 2, Interview, May 2026).

This indicates that shortage of teachers contributes to heavy workload of teachers and hinders their participation in school leadership activities. Teachers are supposed to teach many periods, they have little time to attend meetings, participate in committees and engage in other decision-making processes. It means that teacher's overload affects not only their instructional responsibilities but also their opportunities to participate in school management.

In a similar way, one Ward Educational Officer expressed similar thoughts. He said:

"Where teachers are overloaded, school leaders often make decisions without sufficient consultation because teachers have little time to participate in meetings and other leadership activities. Heavy teaching and administrative responsibilities make it difficult for teachers to attend consultation meetings or contribute fully to discussions. As a result, some important decisions may be made without sufficient teacher input, particularly when immediate action is required." (WEO 08, Interview, May 2026).

Moreover, the document review supported these findings based on the school timetables, workload allocation registers for teachers and school establishment reports, it was revealed that most schools had shortage of teachers resulting in heavy teacher workload. The minutes of staff meetings showed that there was low teacher attendance at some of the meetings due to teacher's being busy with classroom instructions or other professional activities.

Thus, the finding suggests that the teachers' heavy workload is not merely an individual problem. It is an organizational problem related to the staffing level, duties allocation and activity volume in school. The interpretation is consistent with the findings of Chiwamba and Kigobe (2022), who identified multiple administrative responsibilities as a major challenge in school leadership. The finding is also consistent with the wider literature on teacher participation. Participative leadership is unlikely to work efficiently where teachers are forced to choose between participating in school management and performing their teaching functions. Participation will only become sustainable where the leadership responsibilities will be included in realistic workload arrangements.

Therefore, teachers' overload is a critical challenge affecting the implementation of participative leadership practices. Teachers' heavy instructional responsibilities and other competing administrative demands hindered teacher participation in school leadership activities and collaborative decision-making. The issue of heavy teacher workload can be resolved through increasing teachers and proper workload allocation.

Inadequate Consideration of Teachers' Opinions

According to the teachers' responses, 39 (42.9%) teachers agreed that the Head Teacher does not always consider their views when making important school decisions. Meanwhile, 25 (27.5%) disagreed and 27 (29.7%) remained neutral with a mean score of 3.14 and standard deviation of 1.234.

This indicates that participative leadership to some extent does not only imply that teachers have opportunities to state their views but also to have these views taken into account in decision-making. The process of consultation where teachers' views do not lead to any consideration and feedback may undermine perceptions of genuine participation.

Quantitative data was supported by one Head of School who said:

"Teachers are encouraged to give their opinions in the course of meetings and discussion and these are considered during the process of making school decisions. However, some decisions must comply with government directions, education policies and the priorities of school. Therefore, all suggestions made by teachers cannot be considered." (HOS 11, Interview, May 2026).

Similar opinion was voiced by the Ward Education Officer who stated:

"Head Teachers usually include teachers in the process of discussion before making important decisions. This gives teachers an opportunity to express their opinions and give suggestions. However, the final decision is also supposed to consider ministerial guidelines, district directives and the resources available in school. Therefore, although teachers participate in the process of consultation, not all suggestions can be considered." (WEO 1, Interview, May 2026).

This indicates that the structural barriers that prevent the implementation of consultative approach to decision making in public primary schools where the opinions of teachers were supposed to comply with the regulatory and institutional frameworks.

Document review also confirmed the above data. Minutes of staff meetings showed that teachers are participated in the process of giving suggestions regarding academic and discipline issues, school development plans and resource utilization. However, implementation reports indicated that the teachers' opinions are considered to some extent. It means that the process of implementation of teachers' suggestions in the final decisions was limited.

This issue is consistent with the findings of Amos et al. (2022), who found that teachers can receive delegated responsibilities, but lack the decision-making authority. It is also compatible with the theory of Likert, according to which participation should be meaningful, built on the basis of mutual trust and joint responsibility rather than existence of participatory structures.

Thus, there is a need for the Heads of Schools to provide the mechanism for demonstrating how teachers' suggestions are considered in school decisions. Even though some of the suggestions cannot be accepted, the explanation of the reasons for the final decision may help to maintain the mutual trust.

Poor Communication Between Heads of Schools and Teachers

Poor communication was another major barrier. The teachers' responses show that 44 (48.4%) teachers agreed that poor communication between Heads of Schools and teachers limits participative leadership. In contrast, 30 (33.0%) disagreed and 17 (18.7%) were neutral with a mean score of 3.24 and standard deviation of 1.328.

Communication is crucial to participation because teachers cannot participate effectively in the decision-making process if they do not receive timely information about the matters in question. The findings suggest that there are communication channels in the school like staff and departmental meetings, but these channels are affected by teachers' different schedules, their competing responsibilities and the necessity of immediate decisions.

This was illustrated by one of the Heads of Schools:

"There are various channels of communication between school leaders and teachers, including staff and departmental meetings. However, teachers have different teaching schedules and responsibilities. This is why they do not always receive or reply on the information in time and it sometimes causes delay in receiving the feedback and prevents informing all teachers at once." (HOS 4, Interview, May 2026).

This shows that communication problems are partly organizational. The presence of communication channels does not automatically mean the presence of two-way timely communication. Teachers may not be available at the time when meetings are arranged, they may receive the information too late or urgent decisions may have to be made before consultation is over.

One of the Ward Education Officers highlighted that:

"There should be timely and open communication because teachers need the timely information to participate in decision making. When the information is communicated, teachers get well-informed about the issues and can give the necessary suggestions. Without sufficient information their participation will be limited and some of the decisions will be made without proper input from the teachers." (WEO 8, Interview, May 2026).

The document review supported the above data. There were records of staff meetings, memorandums and other communication records, but there were poorly attended meetings and communication of information was sometimes delayed because of competing school activities.

The finding is consistent with the findings of Chiwamba and Kigobe (2022), who identified poor communication skills as one of the challenges to school leadership. The finding is also strongly consistent with the theory of Likert's Participative Leadership Theory where communication is an integral condition of mutual trust and cooperation in the decision-making process. Thus, schools need communication systems that are not dependent only on physical meetings. Effective communication systems, efficient information sharing, and feedback mechanisms could minimize the impact of conflicting time schedules of teachers.

Lack of Opportunities for Participation in Leadership Responsibilities

A total of 46 (50.6%) of the teachers agreed that lack of opportunities prevented teachers from engaging in participative leadership, 24 (26.4%) disagreed and 21 (23.1%) were neutral. The item received the highest mean score among six factors with a mean score of 3.35 and standard deviation of 1.311.

It means that the main challenge is not the absence of participatory structures, but unequal distribution of opportunities within them. While teachers may participate in the implementation of school programs, only a small number of teachers have the opportunities to chair committees, coordinate programs, lead departments or be responsible for some important administrative activity.

Interviews have revealed that Heads of Schools used experienced teachers because of their concerns about competence, confidence and efficiency of less experienced teachers. One Head of School said:

"We provide the teachers with the opportunity to participate in the process of leadership via committees and coordination of departments, but not all teachers are ready to assume leadership responsibilities. Some teachers need more experience, guidance and confidence to become effective leaders of school activities. Therefore, we gradually assign the leadership responsibilities in accordance with their abilities and readiness." (HOS 6, Interview, May 2026).

Another Head of School stated:

"Leadership responsibilities are assigned depending on the experience, professional competence and specialization of teachers. Teachers with more experience and specialization are usually provided with more leadership responsibilities in committees and departmental activities. Consequently, some teachers are more involved in the process of school leadership than others." (HOS 10, Interview, May 2026).

In the same vein, one of Ward Education Officers provided the following explanation:

"Some schools rely much on the few experienced teachers to manage the majority of leadership activities as they have the necessary skills and experience to assume leadership responsibilities efficiently. As a result, other teachers have fewer opportunities to participate in leadership activities and to develop their leadership skills." (WEO 5, Interview, May 2026).

The documentary analysis has shown that committee appointment records, departmental leadership registers and organizational structures indicated that leadership responsibilities were concentrated among a relatively small number of experienced teachers.

The evidences are in line with the finding of Ahtiainen and Heikonen (2023), who have found that uneven participation and different willingness of teachers to participate in leadership activities are the obstacles for leadership distribution. The finding also agrees with Kosgei and Edabu (2023), who emphasize the importance of equal sharing of leadership responsibilities and mentorship.

According to Likert, participation creates organizational involvement, responsibility and commitment. Concentration of leadership among a small number of experienced teachers limits opportunities for participation and makes it impossible to develop the collective responsibility of teachers. It means that the implication of the finding is not that every teacher should have immediate opportunities to assume the major leadership responsibilities regardless of his/her competence. But the schools should create graduated opportunities to assume leadership supported by mentoring, coaching and guidance to help teachers with less experience to become competent.

Lack of Leadership Support

The lack of support of school leadership has become another challenge. According to the teachers' responses, 44 (48.4%) teachers agreed that lack of leadership support discourages teachers from participation in decision-making and other leadership activities in schools, 26 (28.6%) disagreed and 21 (23.1%) were neutral with a mean score of 3.24 and standard deviation of 1.311.

This implies that participative leadership involve teachers in decision-making process and provision of continuous support from heads teachers in the form of professional guidance, encouragement and recognition of contributions made

These quantitative data were supported by Head of School during interview who said:

"We encourage teachers to participate in school management by providing guidance and delegating leadership responsibilities to them. However, limited resources and competing administrative duties sometimes make it difficult to provide continuous support for each teacher. As a result, some teachers may need additional guidance and follow-up to participate effectively in leadership and school management activities." (HOS 16, Interview, May 2026)

Similarly, another Head of School stated:

"Teachers need encouragement and continuous support to develop confidence and competence in leadership roles. We provide mentoring and guidance when we have an opportunity, especially through committee work and departmental responsibilities. However, the time available for continuous mentoring is sometimes limited by other school responsibilities and administrative duties." (HOS 15, Interview, May 2026)

Also, One of Ward Education Officers supported the quantitative data through his explanations:

"In case of low-level professional support and feedback from school leaders, teachers can become demotivated to participate in decision-making and other leadership activities. Due to the lack of continuous support, teachers can feel uncomfortable in performing assigned leadership responsibilities or in their contribution not being appreciated." (WEO 3, Interview, May 2026).

This indicates that leadership opportunities are not enough for teachers to participate actively. Teachers need an enabling environment in which they have the opportunity to participate with professional support. If a teacher is assigned a responsibility but has no guidance, he/she can regard it as additional burden but not as an opportunity. The documentary review has shown that schools had mechanisms for mentorship, participation of teachers in committees and professional meetings. But the implementation of staff-development activities was inconsistent due to financial restrictions, lack of training opportunities and competing administrative responsibilities.

These evidences are in agreement with Kene et al. (2021), who have identified insufficient institutional support and limited leadership development as the constraints to collaborative leadership. The finding also supports Likert's Participative Leadership Theory, which pays special attention to support, trust and appreciation of the employees' contributions as the condition of effective participation. It means that Heads of Schools should not judge teacher participation only in terms of whether they have responsibilities assigned to them. They should also evaluate whether teachers have the guidance, feedback, recognition and resources needed to perform their responsibilities effectively.

8. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study identified six factors that hinders effective implementation of participatory leadership practices in public primary schools in Morogoro district council, Tanzania. The teachers' heavy workload decreases the time available for consultations. The shortage of time for consultations make the decisions being made without taking into account the opinion of teachers. Poor communication makes the access to information harder for teachers and prevents them from making informed decisions. In case if teachers are not properly supported, they can be unwilling to assume the leadership responsibilities. In turn, if leadership responsibilities are concentrated among a small number of experienced teachers, other teachers have fewer opportunities to develop leadership competencies.

Staff shortages increase the teachers' workload; the increased teachers' workload decreases the time for participation; the decrease in participation weakens the communication and consultation; the lack of opportunities prevents the development of leadership; and the lack of support reduces the confidence and willingness of teachers to participate. It expands the application of the Participative Leadership Theory in the context of schools. According to this theory, the participation of employees leads to the organizational effectiveness via involvement, communication, mutual trust and shared responsibility. However, the present findings show that such conditions should be institutionally supported. It means that the participation cannot be ensured without the time, information, opportunities, mentorship and leadership support.

9. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the participative leadership in public primary schools is more constrained by the presence of organizational conditions in which the participatory mechanisms function than by the absence of such mechanisms. Schools have the committees, meetings and delegated responsibilities, but the participation is impossible without the time, manageable workload, communication, opportunities, professional support and consideration of teachers' contributions. Therefore, the study concludes that the participative leadership should be viewed as the organizational process and not just a leadership technique. The effectiveness of this leadership depends on the ability of the school system to create the conditions that make the participation of teachers possible.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

President Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) should recruit adequate teachers and making proper teachers' deployment in public primary schools in order to address the problem of staffing shortages. Ward Education Officers should pay attention not only to the presence of participatory structures, but also to the opportunities for teachers to participate. The supervision should also consider the distribution of leadership responsibilities, consultation practices, communication system and participation in decision-making by teachers. Heads of Schools should institutionalize the consultations in school timetable, carry out a workload assessment before assigning any new leadership responsibilities. They should also improve two-way communication. Staff and departmental meetings should be supplemented by flexible communication channels to reach teachers with difficult schedule. The important decisions should be communicated well in advance to give an opportunity to make suggestions.

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