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STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TO ENHANCE COLLECTIVE DECISION-MAKING IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MOROGORO MUNICIPALITY, TANZANIA

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Abstract: **The present paper presents the results obtained through strategies that could be used to improve instructional leadership practices so that collective decision making can be improved in secondary public schools of Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania. The present paper is based on the specific objectives of the research conducted through the mixed method approach where the researcher aimed at proposing strategies that could be used to improve instructional leadership practices in terms of collective decision making. Pragmatism research paradigm and the convergent parallel mixed methods were applied in this research. Seventy eight (78) respondents were interviewed using the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. However, the implementation of instructional leadership was hindered by high workloads in administration, lack of leadership development, shortage of resources, inconsistency in instructional supervision, and low levels of teacher participation. The results show that there is need for a holistic approach that would entail continued professional development of principals, minimization of excessive administration, frequent instructional supervision and mentoring, teacher participation, and improved professional learning communities in addition to decision-making structures in institutions. The instructional leadership should be executed as a collaborative activity rather than a supervisory activity. This approach conforms to Distributed Leadership Theory since it sees teachers as active participants in the process of improving instruction and governance in the institutions.**

Keywords: **instructional leadership; collective decision-making; distributed leadership; teacher participation; professional development; public secondary schools; Tanzania.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of instructional leadership has become significant in educational management due to the influence of school leaders on the circumstances in which teaching and learning occur (Hallinger, 2022; Anania at el., 2023). In the current research, instructional leadership is defined as intentional activities undertaken by school principals aimed at guiding the implementation of curriculums, supervision of teaching and learning processes, provision of instructional feedback, promotion of professional development of teachers and creating a professional environment. Collective decision-making, on the other hand, implies the involvement of school stakeholders in problem identification, generation of alternatives,

decision-making, and implementation of decisions (Amos et al., 2022; Macha & Mhagama, 2022). The connection between instructional leadership and collective decision-making is significant since leadership activities leading to professional dialogue and teacher participation may help school management shift from centralized decision-making to shared responsibility (Aron & Amos, 2024).

Dissertation findings indicate generally positive perceptions of several practices related to instructional leadership in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. High levels of support for curriculum implementation and instructional feedback as well as collaborative teaching and learning were reported. However, there is enough evidence indicating inconsistency of two other practices – instructional supervision and professional development. Participation of teachers in key decision-making processes was moderate, and some teachers claimed that their positions were not taken into account in decision-making. All the above indicates the importance of distinguishing between the existence of participatory structure and real participation.

The article addresses improvement strategies for enhancing instructional leadership practices in order to enhance collective decision-making. This article therefore goes further than simply describing the presence of instructional leadership in order to develop effective and institutionally feasible strategies of how to improve its contribution to collective decision-making. These strategies are developed in accordance with the findings of the study and interpreted using Distributed Leadership Theory. (Spillane & Ortiz, 2023; Aron et al., 2024).

This research is important because the influence of instructional leadership can never be measured by what individual principals do in schools. It also relies on enabling teachers to make their professional contribution, proper delegation of leadership functions, creation of an environment that supports communication, and sufficient backing from education officials (Mkumbo & Ndimbo, 2023). For this reason, the article considers instructional leadership and collective decision-making to be related organizational processes.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

The restricted instructional leadership practices in secondary schools that concurrently contribute to effective instructions and inclusive school governance practices. The study revealed the inconsistency between the role of instructional leadership in terms of its expected role and its implementation in schools. Overwhelming workloads can prevent sufficient time allocation to classroom supervision and collaboration, and insufficient leadership training can impede school heads' application of modern instructional and distributive leadership practices (Bush & Anania, 2023; Makwinya, 2022). Insufficient financial and instructional resources can also hinder professional development and collaborative practices (Mtei at el,. 2022;). Moreover, teacher involvement can be only procedural when teachers participate in meetings and yet their suggestions do not become part of final decisions (Macha & Mhagama, 2022).

Thus, the issue is not the lack of instructional leadership per se but the inconsistent implementation of instructional leadership as a collaborative process where teachers are involved in decision-making. It appears that there are considerable foundations for such involvement of teachers in secondary schools, and they require systematic development (Amos et al., 2022).

3. OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Objective: The article aim to addresses strategic thinking for improving instructional leadership practices in enhancing collective decision-making.

Research question: What strategies can be proposed to improve instructional leadership practices in enhancing collective decision-making in public secondary schools?

4. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

4.1 Instructional Leadership ya ya ya

Instructional leadership puts the focus of teaching and learning at the heart of school leadership. In terms of its practical applications, instructional leadership comprised curriculum management, instructional supervision, feedback, professional development, and collaborative teaching. Hallinger (2022) stresses that instructional leadership is still strongly connected to setting school objectives, curriculum coordination, and creating favorable conditions for improved instruction. The implication for practice is that school administrators should pay leadership attention to teaching while at the same time creating favorable conditions for teachers to improve collectively.

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4.2 Distributed Leadership Theory

The article is mostly underpinned by Distributed Leadership Theory developed by James Spillane. This theory views leadership as a practice that is distributed between leaders, followers, and the context as opposed to an activity carried out only by the official head of the school. It is especially appropriate in the context of collaborative decision-making due to the professional knowledge possessed by teachers in matters of implementation of curriculum and pedagogical practices within the school.

This theory offers a good framework for explaining the challenges that are raised in the study. Just the distribution of leadership does not necessarily ensure equal participation. Unless the roles are clear, there is no accountability and trust culture within the organization, the participation may be more symbolic or the involvement may be left to a few people. The proposed strategies are a combination of distribution of responsibilities and clearly defined processes for decision-making, professional development and accountability.

5. METHODOLOGY

In terms of the research methodology, the paper used pragmatism research philosophy and convergent parallel mixed-method design. The study was done in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. The population of the study was 109 persons in the selected schools and education offices, while the sample was 78 respondents; 70 teachers, seven Heads of Schools and one Ward Education Officer. The teachers were sampled using simple random sampling while Heads of Schools and Ward Education Officer were sampled using purposive sampling.

Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used in collecting data. The questionnaire for teachers contained items on instructional leadership and collective decision-making that were scaled by Likert scale. Qualitative data gathering instruments included opinions about the leadership practices, problems and possible solutions. The analysis of quantitative data was done using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation while qualitative data was analyzed by organizing them under themes. (Creswell, 2023).

For the present study, the focus lies on the evidences that support the proposed strategies, which have been formulated after synthesizing the evidences on instructional leadership practices, implementation challenges, and their effect on decision making. Therefore, these strategies are evidence-based recommendations, rather than experimental interventions.

6. FINDINGS, DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS

Data Presentation

Table 1: Teachers' Demographic Information (n = 78)

Academic qualifications	Male	Female
Diploma	3	2
Bachelor	28	35
Masters	4	6
Total	**35**	**43**

Source: Field data-2026.

The sample consisted of 78, respondents. Of these, 43 (55.8%) were females while 35 (44.2%) were males. This means that female teachers made up the larger percentage of the respondents.

In terms of educational attainment, most of the teachers had attained a bachelor's degree while others had diploma and master's degrees. None of the respondents indicated that he/she was a PhD holder. The prevalence of those who had attained bachelor's degrees implies that most of the teachers have the minimum level of education required of them as teachers in secondary schools. Those who had master's degrees meant that there is advanced professional expertise which can contribute to school improvement efforts and decision making. It is clear from the findings that the respondents were adequately educated to give reliable information on instructional leadership and decision-making.

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Findings.

6.1 Existing instructional leadership practices provide a foundation for improvement

Statement: "My school head supports teachers in curriculum implementation."

Responses	Frequencies	Percentages
Neutral	10	14.3%
Agree	25	35.7%
Strongly Agree	35	50.0%

Source field data 2026

The findings reveal that instructional leadership existed in the sampled schools before, thereby providing a basis for building collective decision making. Teachers felt that Heads of Schools provided support in the implementation of curriculum (Mean = 4.36, SD = 0.72) and gave feedback about their teaching practices (Mean = 4.14, SD = 0.50). Teaching and learning collaboratively also received adequate support (Mean = 4.21). This implies that the school heads were not removed from instructional affairs since there were some instructional leadership practices existing at the time.

The implication is that the development process does not have to start with the formation of completely new structures. Rather, the existing instructional practices could be redesigned to ensure that there is increased teacher engagement. In this way, feedback in the classroom can be followed by a professional discussion whereby teachers collectively identify instructional issues and agree on measures of improvement. The same applies to collaborative lesson planning that can be linked to school instructional decisions.

6.2 Instructional supervision and professional development require greater consistency

Statement 3:"Instructional supervision is done regularly in this school."

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Disagree	5	7.1%
Neutral	25	35.7%
Agree	15	21.4%
Strong Agree	25	35.7%

Source field data 2026

The issue of instructional supervision was seen as important but not as highly rated as curriculum development and feedback support. Instructional supervision had a mean score of 3.86 (SD = 0.97), with 57.1% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement that instructional supervision was frequent, whereas 35.7% of respondents were neutral about that statement. The aspect of professional development received a mean score of 3.79 (SD = 0.98) since 57.2% agreed or strongly agreed that school heads facilitated professional development.

In order to foster regular support and professional learning, it seems necessary to develop systematic ways of doing this, rather than leaving it all up to initiative on the part of school heads. This may include setting regular schedules, peer tutoring programs, professional learning communities, and follow-up mechanisms. In addition, professional development should be connected with the instructional support needed, and with collective decision-making processes. (Makwinya, 2022; Tanzania Institute of Education, 2023).

6.3 Teacher participation exists, but meaningful influence needs strengthening

Statement 6:"Teachers are involved in important decision-making in my school."

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Neutral	25	35.7%
Agree	25	35.7%
Strongly Agree	20	28.6%

Source field data 2026

The results related to collective decision-making point to another area requiring intervention. 64.3% of teachers indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that teachers were involved in important decisions within the school, though the mean in the dissertation was relatively moderate, and standard deviation showed some degree of variance in the experience of the teachers. Besides, with regards to the issue of teachers' opinions being taken into account in the decision-making process when it comes to issues of teaching and learning, the response distribution was somewhat varied, with 34.3% agreeing or strongly agreeing, 32.9% being neutral and 32.9% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

It could be interpreted as the fact that some form of participation is possible, but the role of teachers' opinions in influencing final decisions is rather doubtful. The implication is that schools should differentiate between mere consultation and actual collective decision-making. Teachers should be able to witness how their proposals are taken into account, approved, changed or refused and why. (Amos et al., 2022; Macha & Mhagama, 2022).

6.4 Major barriers requiring strategic responses

From the qualitative findings, heavy administrative workload, lack of leadership training, insufficient instructional resources, inconsistent instructional supervision, and limited teacher involvement were identified as key challenges. These barriers are interconnected in that a school head that spends too much time in administration leaves little room for classroom observations and professional discourse. Lack of training may limit the confidence in distributed leadership, while insufficient resources may limit professional development opportunities. In cases where teachers are not motivated enough, the school head is likely to retain most of the decision-making power. (Bush & Anania, 2023; Makwinya et al., 2022).

These results suggest an approach from the perspective of system. Enhancing collective decision making cannot only happen through telling school heads to ‘involve teachers’. It needs time, leadership skills, school structures, professional development opportunities, and resources. (Spillane & Ortiz, 2023). **Discussions:**

7. STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND COLLECTIVE DECISION-MAKING

7.1 Establish continuous professional development for school heads

There should be an institutionalization of professional development that emphasizes instructional leadership, distributed leadership, decision making, coaching, feedback and conflict management. Training should not just be restricted to induction programs only. There should also be workshops and mentoring on a regular basis. This recommendation is specifically based on the gap found in leadership training and conforms to the findings in the study where leadership ability influences the consistency of instructional practices. (Bush & Anania, 2023; Makwinya, 2022; Tanzania Institute of Education, 2023).

7.2 Reduce unnecessary administrative workload

Heads of Schools need to re-examine their functions to ensure that tasks which could have been delegated are not overloading them, thus taking away from instructional leadership. It is through proper delegation of tasks to deputy heads, heads of departments, and other qualified personnel that more time will be available for observing lessons, mentoring teachers, engaging in professional conversations, and making participatory decisions. Delegation must come with roles and accountability and not just burden transfer. (Bush & Anania, 2023; Spillane & Ortiz, 2023).

7.3 Institutionalize regular instructional supervision and feedback

There is need for schools to develop an annual or termly plan for supervising the instructional process. The supervisory process should not be disciplinary but developmental in nature. At the end of class observation, the head of school and teacher should work together to identify strengths, weaknesses, and the necessary improvements. Whenever it is possible, the heads of department and other seasoned teachers should join in peer assistance programs.

7.4 Strengthen school-based professional learning communities

Subject Panels, department meetings, peer coaching, and collaborative planning sessions could be used to enhance the professional learning communities. Structures such as these offer an opportunity for teachers to learn from each other and solve any instructional problems together. The strength of collaborative teaching revealed by this study can be leveraged into a more organized professional learning community approach. (Spillane & Ortiz, 2023).

7.5 Create transparent mechanisms for meaningful teacher participation

A proper procedure must be created to clarify which decisions need consultation by the teachers, decisions made together, and those for which delegated authority is used. The staff meetings should follow an agenda that provides an opportunity to teachers to present their arguments, alternatives, and participate in making decisions. The minutes of the meeting should include the significant suggestions and the decisions reached, while future meetings should give feedback about their implementation.

7.6 Develop distributed leadership teams

Distributed leadership responsibilities should be shared by the Headteachers, deputy headteachers, heads of departments, subject leaders and competent teachers. Distributed leadership groups can be responsible for various areas of instruction such as curriculum delivery, assessment, professional development, and learning support. It is imperative to ensure that the distribution does not lead to role ambiguity, and this can be achieved through accountability. (Spillane & Ortiz, 2023).

7.7 Improve resource allocation for instructional priorities

School and educational leaders need to ensure that any resource at their disposal is allocated to initiatives that contribute to instruction. When there is little resource at their disposal, it is best used when they work with teachers to establish what needs prioritization in instruction. Such an approach not only enhances instructional leadership but also teacher ownership.

7.8 Strengthen mentorship and networking among school leaders

The Heads of Schools, especially the inexperienced ones, need to engage in mentorship and learning among peers in clusters. The Schools in the Municipality can form professional networks where the instructional problems are identified and discussed and where solutions are shared and evidence of school improvement is reviewed. This particular dissertation highlights mentoring and collaboration among neighboring schools as one of the strategies for Morogoro Municipality. (Bush & Anania, 2023; Spillane & Ortiz, 2023).

7.9 Introduce monitoring indicators for participatory leadership

While education officers must ensure not only that schools have meetings but also that teachers participate effectively at such meetings, the following are some useful measures: How often teachers have instructional supervision, how many times teachers participate in professional learning sessions, how many teachers are present in instructional committees, indication that teacher recommendations have been taken into consideration, and how teacher-recommended decisions have been followed up.

7.10 Strengthen teacher motivation and recognition

Teachers become more active when they feel valued for participation. Principals of schools need to acknowledge their constructive contributions, facilitate their professional growth, delegate proper duties, and communicate in a respectful manner. Motivation cannot be provided only through money; it can also come from professional recognition, autonomy, trust, and the opportunity to lead. (Nzilano et el 2022).

The recommendations mentioned in the paper agree with the key postulate of Distributed Leadership Theory which states that leadership gets stronger as responsibility and expertise are distributed throughout the organization. In this research there was strong evidence about collaborative teaching, instructional feedback, and curriculum support. However, the researchers identified weak evidence about proper supervision, professional development and the influence of teachers on the decision-making process. It means that these schools have important relational elements of distributed leadership but lack the proper structure to convert collaboration into collective leadership. (Hallinger, 2022).

Also, the results show that professional development is a strategic means of achieving something more than just training. The dissertation claims that the professional development opportunities of teachers were inconsistently encountered compared to feedback and collaborative teaching. Professional development can have dual purposes as it helps to enhance instructional skills and also the capability of teachers to engage in leadership activities. This is similar to the idea of the Tanzania Institute of Education that emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development for curriculum implementation. (Bush & Anania, 2023).

The result concerning the administrative burden is crucial. Instructional leadership requires time for classroom observation and professional discussion. In the case where the head teacher is busy with administration, it is difficult for him or her to carry out instructional leadership regularly. Therefore, cutting unnecessary burdens and sharing the tasks of leadership could create a favorable environment for instructional leadership. The proposed method does not mean the absence of accountability but adjustment of administrative practices to the instructional mission of the school. (Bush & Anania, 2023; Makwinya, 2022).

Further results have shown that collective decision-making needs to be perceived as a feature of participation rather than as the mere existence of consultation mechanisms. The difference between the relatively positive attitude towards teacher participation and the mixed attitude to whether teachers' views are taken into account shows that sometimes participation can be procedural. Influence, feedback, openness, and joint responsibility are key elements of collective decision-making. It is here that the suggested strategies will be the most effective. (Amos et al., 2022; Macha et al., 2022).

8. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

For Heads of Schools, this study calls for a change in perspective about the concept of instructional leadership from supervision to improvement through collaboration. For teachers, the study suggests the need for professionalism in governance, curriculum implementation, and instructional problem-solving processes. For Ward, District and Municipal Education Officers, the study suggests that they should mentor, monitor and develop school heads professionally rather than just inspect them. For the Ministry that takes care of education and the local government authorities, the study suggests that the policies on leadership should create realistic conditions for instructional leadership like time, capacity building and ways of involving teachers in the processes. (Hallinger, 2022; Spillane & Ortiz, 2023).

Institutions can start with affordable means like having scheduled meetings for professional learning, having feedback forms, having instructional committees led by teachers, mentoring from teachers and keeping records for all decisions made. (Amos et al., 2022; Macha & Mhagama, 2022).

9. CONCLUSION

From the article, the solution to building instructional leadership in the public secondary schools goes beyond enhancing the frequency of supervision as well as instructing the heads of schools to engage the teachers. The key point here is that instructional leadership must be institutionalized as a process involving collaboration between professional learning, instructional development and collective decision-making. From the findings made within Morogoro Municipality, there are quite a number of good practices that are taking place including curriculum support, instructional feedback and collaborative teaching. However, there are still some challenges such as inconsistent supervision, inadequate professional development, administration load, scarce resources and lack of teachers' influence.

The findings are thus dealt with in a series of interrelated strategies which include continuous professional development of the school heads, reduction of delegation of unnecessary administration duties, developmental supervision and feedback, professional learning communities, teacher involvement mechanisms, distributed leadership teams, better instructional resource allocation, peer mentoring of the school leaders, participatory monitoring and teacher recognition and motivation.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Continuous professional development programs should be instituted by education authorities for Heads of Schools that should emphasize instructional leadership, distributed leadership, and participatory decision making. (Bush & Anania, 2023; Spillane & Ortiz, 2023).

Heads of Schools should introduce instructional supervision, positive feedback and follow-ups, using them for professional growth mainly. (Hallinger, 2022; Makwinya, 2022).

In addition, professional learning communities and collaboration in instructional activities that would allow teachers to lead and work together in problem solving, as well as clear mechanisms through which teachers can contribute to significant instructional decision-making and get feedback on how their ideas were applied. (Amos et al., 2022; Macha & Mhagama, 2022).

School leader mentoring, monitoring and peer-learning initiatives should be bolstered through Ward, District, and Municipal Education Officers.

The Ministry and the Local Government Authorities need to conduct an assessment of the administrative burden faced by school heads and develop a process of effective delegation that would give school leaders enough time for instructional tasks. (Bush & Anania, 2023; PO-RALG, 2022).

Further research needs to assess the effectiveness of the suggested strategies through longitudinal research and see how improvement in participatory instructional leadership impacts teacher engagement and learner performance. (Creswell, 2023).

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