



Head teachers' instructional leadership practices in Tanzanian public primary schools: Evidence from Mwanza region

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the head teacher's instructional leadership practices in public primary schools in Tanzania. Specifically, it examined the headteacher's effectiveness in defining school mission-focused practices, managing instructional-focused practices, and promoting positive school climate. The study employed a convergent mixed design within the framework of a mixed-methods approach in the Ilemela and Misungwi district councils in the Mwanza region, Tanzania. The study was grounded in instructional leadership theory, which guided it. From a population of 2,994 teachers in 218 public primary schools, Yamane's formula yielded a sample size of 352, including ordinary, academic, and head teachers, plus key informants. Respondents were chosen from 44 schools in two districts to ensure that the study's sample was both proportional and representative. Questionnaire, interview, and documentary review were employed in data collection. The study found that the perception of head teachers' adoption of instructional leadership practices was high. However, the qualitative data indicated the moderate adoption of instructional leadership practices due to heavy administrative responsibilities such as ad hoc meetings, supervising constructional projects, and financial management roles, which minimize head teachers' time and attention to fully focus on the instructional practices. Therefore, the study recommends that the government assign school construction projects to qualified engineers and employ school accounts personnel to reduce administrative duties.

Keywords: Head Teachers, Instructional Leadership, School Climate, School Mission, School Program

I. INTRODUCTION

Instructional leadership has widely been acknowledged in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in schools across the globe (Aron & Amos, 2024; Bush & Anania, 2023). Empirical evidence from literatures shows that, most of the current researches on school leadership highlight the significant effects of instructional leadership practices on improving teaching and learning (Gyamerah, 2021). This approach, which is marked by knowledge sharing, collaboration, and leading by example, inspires teachers and contributes to the overall school improvement (Kano, 2024; Sharafat *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, instructional leadership has been identified as a key factor which influences teachers' work habits (Kano, 2024; Pendleton-Brown, 2019).

The demands for quality education provision have grown over the years and Tanzania is no exception of this phenomenon (URT, 2014). Since her independence in 1961, Tanzania has been struggling to provide quality education service to combat ignorance, poverty and diseases, with a strong focus on human capital investment for socio-economic development (Freeman, 2020; Ismail, 2022; Mushi, 2006). Empirical evidence reveals that, the quality of education system largely depends on effective school leadership, which is significant in shaping the teaching profession through influencing both teachers and pupils (Niemi, 2021; Stromquist, 2018).

In her education development journey, Tanzania adopted decentralized governance structures and policies from the 1990s, that promoted school-based management and increased accountability for head teachers (Manaseh, 2016; Rwiza, 2016). Accordingly, URT (2018) recognizes the role of the School Management Team (SMT) as an organ responsible for managing school functions and operations with the head teacher holding a central position. As such, head teachers are responsible for supervising, overseeing and ensure quality teaching and learning (Manaseh, 2016). Remarkably, decentralization process brought in new roles in school leadership (Rwiza, 2016). Under the devolution of decision-making authority, head teachers are thus required to lead the planning process for their school

development. In this role, they are responsible to create an effective school learning culture, coordinate the school instructional activities and ensure supportive teaching and learning school environment (URT, 2013). More importantly, the head teachers have to ensure that, teachers are supported, encouraged and motivated to be productive as they play their teaching roles. Benti and Tarekegne (2022) urge that, the head teachers need to reward their teachers often for the little achievement they make that make a positive significant difference for their students, colleagues, and for the school. Notably, such kind of appreciation raises teachers' working habits and enthusiasm and trigger in them high levels of job commitment, satisfaction, engagement as well as emotional well-being (ibid).

Similarly, Stromquist (2018) posits that, head teachers occupy a critical position in shaping the teaching profession in the school community. However, studies have consistently shown that the attributes for teachers' enthusiasm towards work are mutually connected to how their head teacher provides support and encourage them to bring about pupils' achievement. Thus, instructional leadership role has a decisive impact on teachers' commitment towards work, quality of teaching and pupils' achievements (Mahmoud-Raba, 2017).

The Education and Training Policy 2014 version 2023 identified the need to improve the provision of education in order to meet the objectives of education in the country. In addition, the school improvement directive issued by the Education Commissioner in July 2013 called upon head teachers to put in place a mechanism to provide coaching and mentoring to teachers, establish learning communities in schools to facilitate teacher engagement and promote competence and willingness to work (URT, 2018). Furthermore, studies conducted in Tanzania by Bush and Anania (2023) and Manaseh (2016) show that, the head teacher is considered to be an instructional leader as stipulated in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) policy document. They are recognized as internal instructional supervisors and their core function is to ensure that, curriculum is effectively implemented through monitoring the preparation and use of academic documents needed for classroom instructions (Manaseh, 2016). However, studies on instructional leadership conducted in Tanzania, for example, Bush and Anania (2023) focused their attention on few instructional leadership practices and did not address core domains in Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) model such as monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, curriculum coordination as well as creating a positive learning climate. Additionally, the very small, purposively selected sample (N=20) leaders limits generalizability and prevents a full understanding of instructional leadership practices across Tanzanian schools. Similarly, the study by Manaseh (2016) focused on one instructional leadership domain on how head teachers manage instructional programme in secondary schools while leaving other domains such as defining school mission and developing positive school climate unexplored, hence limiting full understanding of all instructional leadership practices across Tanzanian schools.

Several initiatives have been undertaken by the government in attempting to enhance quality instructional leadership skills among the head teachers in Tanzania. The Presidents' Office Regional Administration and Local Government [PO-RALG] (2022) issued a policy directive which requires head teachers to be holders of ordinary diploma in education assuming that, they have adequate instructional leadership skills to assume their instructional roles. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) by then, through a School Improvement Toolkit-Practical Guide for school leaders require all head teachers to carry out instructional leadership practices at their schools in order to realize quality education (URT, 2013; 2021). Furthermore, the guide calls upon school leaders to establish learning communities in the school to boost teachers' teamwork and share skills to foster effective teaching and learning process (ibid).

However, irrespective of the adopted initiatives, the literature has shown that head teachers' working commitment in performing their instructional duties in schools has remained at average levels as reported by (Kashamba *et al.*, 2023; Mohamed, 2020). This situation gives doubt on the proper adoption of instructional leadership practices by the head teachers in the context of Tanzania public primary schools. It is from these realities that the proposed study was developed to assess the head teachers' instructional leadership practices in public primary schools in Tanzania.

1.1 Research Question

To what extent do head teachers adopt instructional leadership practices in public primary schools in Tanzania?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Instructional leadership refers to anything that school leaders do to improve teaching and learning in the school (Hallinger, 2018). McBrayer *et al.* (2020) add that instructional leadership encompasses those actions taken by the school leader with the intention of developing a productive and satisfying working environment for teachers and a desirable learning conditions and outcomes for pupils.



This literature review examines the head teacher's adoption of instructional leadership practices in public primary schools in Tanzania. It is structured into key areas that explore the theoretical underpinnings of instructional leadership with its associated Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) dimensions as practiced by the head teachers. The instructional leadership theory developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) offers a research-based framework for understanding how head teachers can effectively create enabling environment to enhance pupils' achievement. This theory is recognized for its significant contribution to instructional leadership research and remains accredited in contemporary scholarship (Bush & Anania, 2023; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). McBrayer et al. (2020) add that instructional leadership encompasses those actions taken by the school leader with the intention of developing a productive and satisfying working environment for teachers and a desirable learning conditions and outcomes for pupils. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) conceptualized instructional leadership through three central dimensions namely: developing the school's mission; managing the instructional program; and fostering a positive school climate. Their framework has been expansively functional across various educational settings, offering treasured insights into the instructional leadership practices of head teachers.

2.1.1 Developing School's Mission

Good governance practices require schools like any other organizations to have well stated vision, mission and goals, stating where the school needs to be and to get there in order to achieve the intended goals. School governance policy identifies school leaders as responsible persons to initiate, develop, and lead the staff and community create, revise, and review the school mission (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Notably, school leaders are required to use needs assessment methods, pupils' performance data to secure staff input in developing school goals that are easily understood by teachers in the schools while ensuring that staff responsibilities are aligned with the framed goals (Gyamerah, 2021; Ondong, 2024; Ralebese *et al.*, 2025). School leaders therefore, should develop school mission in collaboration with school staff, pupils, and school committee members and other school community members in order to ensure that there is a shared purpose (Kaisara, 2024). The school leaders should also make sure the framed mission centered on educational goals are widely communicated to all school stakeholders which serve as a foundation of sound decision-making. Hallinger and Wang (2015) avow that framed school goals are effectively communicated to members of the school community through discussion with teachers at subject or department levels when making curricular decision, displaying them on the school posters or bulletin boards. As noted also by Bush and Anania (2023); Dongo and Mahlangu (2022); Hallinger (2018), other means of communicating the school goals include having open forum with pupils during assemblies or discussions while ensuring that the classroom priorities of teachers are consistent with the goals and direction of the school.

2.1.2 Managing Instructional Program

Managing instructional programs requires the school leaders to supervise and evaluate instructions; coordinate curricula; and monitor pupils progress (Gyamerah, 2021; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Puruwita *et al.*, 2022). It focuses on a leadership function that aim at enhancing effective teaching and learning process where the head teacher teams up with teachers to develop mechanisms that best align the curriculum with educational standards (Bush & Anania, 2023; Ngowi & Mafwolo, 2022; Sharafat *et al.*, 2024). It also entails provision of instructional support to teachers such as coaching and mentoring to improve teaching practices, supervising and evaluating classroom instruction, conducting observations in classrooms on a regular basis, pointing out specific strengths and weaknesses in teacher's instructional practices and providing timely and constructive feedback (Aureada, 2021; Kaisara, 2024). According to Gyamerah (2021); He *et al.* (2024); Musumi and Mkulu (2020), managing instructional program requires school leaders to meet individually with teachers to discuss pupils progress, discuss academic performance results with teachers to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses, use tests and other performance measure to assess progress toward school goals. Notably, school leaders need also to ensure school instructional resources are provided and used to enhance pupils learning and teachers teaching. Asmuri and Hamzah (2023); Sharafat *et al.* (2024) make an emphasis that head teachers should as well perform supportive instructional practices such as guidance and counselling, analyzing pupils' performance data to inform instructional decisions, monitoring school progress, motivations, effective decision making, communication, as well as promoting effective teaching strategies to ensure high-quality teaching (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Puruwita *et al.*, 2022).

2.1.3 Promoting Positive School Climate

The third domain requires the school leader to promote a positive school learning climate through protecting instructional time; providing incentives for teachers; providing incentives for pupils' learning; promoting the professional development of teachers; and maintaining high visibility (Bush & Anania, 2023; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Puruwita *et al.*, 2022). Fostering a positive school learning climate is determined on how the head teacher cultivates a positive school culture that foster a climate of trust, respect and collaboration among teachers, pupils and



parents; addresses teachers-wellbeing such as safety, social-emotional needs; engages families, community members and external partners in supporting teachers teaching; and resolve conflicts thereby promoting harmonious teaching and learning atmosphere within the school community. In this context; also, the head teacher as an instructional leader is determined on how he/she provides incentives to teachers teaching, protect instructional time, promote professional development for teachers, and maintaining visibility (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Puruwita *et al.*, 2022).

2.1.4 Instructional Leadership Theory

This study is grounded on the Instructional Leadership Theory by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). The theory focuses on the role of the school leader in coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum, and instruction in the school (Hallinger, 2010). This theory assumes that instructional leaders lead from a combination of expertise and charisma, focusing on inspiring teachers' belief to enhance their emotional well-being, pedagogical proficiency, and job commitment (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Seong, 2019; Puruwita *et al.*, 2022; Bush & Anania, 2023). Within the context of a school, the head teacher operationalizes instructional roles to ensure that teachers are committed to perform their tasks effectively and pupils learn productively (OECD, 2016; Gharde *et al.*, 2018; Lane *et al.*, 2019). The theory further assumes that the instructional leader provides practical assistance in developing teachers' job pride and instructional skills and creating amicable school environment for teacher potential to meet the needs of all pupils through effective teaching and learning (Bellibaş *et al.*, 2020; Dilekçi & Limon, 2020; Hallinger *et al.*, 2018).

The theory views school leaders as hand-on principals with instructions and confident in working with teachers on the improvement of teaching and learning (Meyer *et al.*, 2022; Cansoy *et al.*, 2022; Groenewald *et al.*, 2023). The theory further advocates that instructional leaders are goal-oriented, culture builders, lead from a combination of expertise and charisma focusing on pupils' academic outcomes (Ahmad & Hamid, 2021; Bush *et al.*, 2022; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Puruwita *et al.*, 2022). The Instructional Leadership Theory is useful in this study because it addresses mission focused, instructional programme and positive school improvement learning climate practices which are key instructional practices that are well-suited to driving improvements in teaching and learning outcomes (Hallinger *et al.*, 2018; Hui & Singh, 2020).

2.2 Empirical Review

Effective instructional school leaders are urged to assume instructional roles through creating mission-focused practices, managing instructional practices and promoting a positive school learning climate to enhance pupils' learning outcomes (Bush & Anania, 2023; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Puruwita *et al.*, 2022). A good number of researchers attempted to establish the practicalities of the school leaders' instructional practices on the ground. For instances, Ahmad *et al.* (2020) conducted a study on teachers' perceptions on the effect of instructional leadership practices of primary school head-teachers on teacher effectiveness in Pakistani. The study employed quantitative approach and stratified sampling technique was used to get a study sample of 560 participants. The study found that the instructional leadership practices had a significant impact on teacher effectiveness. The study recommended head teachers to improve their instructional practices while through active involvement of teachers in school operational practices. The study by Ahmad *et al.* (2020) is important in the current study because it used the same independent variable which the current study is framed in. However, the previous study was conducted in a different geographical setting and employed quantitative research approach. This current study employed mixed approach as a means to counterbalance the weaknesses inherent within one approach with the strengths of the other (Creswell, 2022).

Another scholar, Kumari (2023) examined the role of primary school principals in enhancing teachers' instructional practices in Sri Lanka. The study employed a multiple case study approach, collecting qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document analysis. The four principals and four teachers who were interviewed provided insights regarding principals' engagement in instructional practices. The study found that all principals were assuming instructional leadership roles, including instructional supervision, feedback giving, providing instructional materials, and managing instructional time. The study also uncovered limited opportunities for principals to receive leadership training. The study recommended capacity building to principals on school management and leadership to enhance their effectiveness as instructional leaders. Kumari's study was important in the current study because it gave insights of instructional leadership practices in which the study objective was framed in. However, the study was limited by its lack of quantitative data, suggesting the need for a mixed-methods approach as adapted in the proposed study to fully understand instructional leadership practices in primary schools in the context of Tanzania.

Additionally, Muthoni and Mungai (2016) explored the efficacy of instructional supervision in public primary schools in Nyeri Central Sub County, Kenya. The study employed descriptive research design. The study revealed that head teachers were efficacious in providing instructional materials, motivating teachers and in enforcing discipline and used evaluation skills, discipline skills; reportorial skills and interactive skills in carrying out instructional supervision.



Notably, most of the head teachers were found to have low levels of efficacy in: making class visitations; defining school goals; monitoring classroom instruction; capacity building for teachers and in providing feedback on pupil's performance; pedagogical and analytical skills. Muthoni and Mungai (2016) recommended capacity building to head teachers on instructional supervision and that instructional supervision be incorporated in the curriculum training, while emphasizing the appointment of head teachers to base on their skills and aptitudes. The study by Muthoni and Mungai (2016) is useful in the current study because it focused on the instructional supervision by the head teachers upon which the current study was edged in. However, the current study went beyond the Muthoni and Mungai's methodological study by adopting mixed method design upon which qualitative and quantitative data were collected by interview, documentary and survey instruments respectively. Using surveys, documentary review and interviews enhanced the depth, validity, and breadth of data collection, allowing the researcher to gather a richer understanding of the research topic through methodological complementarity.

Moreover, Kaai (2016) employed mixed research design and adapted instructional leadership model from Bossert *et al.* (1982) in assessing the understanding and improving instructional leadership practices in primary schools in Karatu District, Tanzania. The study found that teachers were not able to explain the vision and mission of their schools neither the roles of the head teachers leading to poor cooperation within the schools. Kaai (2016) suggested that the government should ensure that, head teachers are properly trained to carry out their instructional roles. Importantly, the study recommended further studies be conducted on the effectiveness of head teacher's managerial and instructional roles due to rapid changes in policies and government reforms occurring in the education sector. Kaai's study is important in the current study because it focused its attention on head teachers' instructional leadership roles to enhance effective teaching and learning process so does the current study. However, the current study differs from Kaai's study, in terms of the models that were adapted in the respective studies. While, Kaai's study adapted instructional leadership model from Bossert *et al.* (1982), the current study adopted instructional leadership model from Hallinger and Murphy (1985). Arguably, literature consistently positions Hallinger and Murphy as operationalized model derived from Bossert *et al.* (1982), enabling measurable tools like the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) and that it best explains instructional leadership practices due to its specificity, empirical validation and widespread adoption in research over Bossert *et al.*'s (1982). Notably, the model expounds core dimensions while adding refinements, making it the benchmark for explaining practices. Bossert *et al.* serves as conceptual groundwork but lacks the behavioral granularity for practical explanation or measurement (Yaacob & Ishak, 2023).

Correspondingly, Logation *et al.* (2021) conducted a study to examine the perceptions and practices of heads of schools' instructional leadership in public secondary schools in Biharamulo district, Tanzania. The study employed concurrent triangulation design. The study found that heads of schools perceived instructional leadership in terms of showing right direction about the teaching through which they supervised preparation of schemes of work and lesson plans, providing teaching and learning resources, promoting program development, and in some occasions visiting teachers in classrooms. The study recommended regular in-service trainings to be organized for heads of schools and more research to be carried out to examine the extent to which heads of schools employ instructional leadership practices. The study by Logation *et al.* (2021) is important in the current study because it focused on instructional leadership practices that the current study was edged in. However, the previous study was conducted in a different geographical setting and focused on heads of secondary schools. The current study responded to the previous study's recommendation that urged more research to be conducted to examine the extent to which heads of schools employ instructional leadership practices.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Based on the research objective, this study employed a convergent mixed method design in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected in parallel, analyzed separately, and then merged (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). More importantly, the study used concurrent triangulation design. The design was preferred because it enabled collection of large amount of data at once with less cost and time (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Having analyzed and merged quantitative and qualitative data, through this design, the results were integrated to get a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Remarkably, the qualitative data were collected for the purpose of confirming, cross-checking and complementing the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2022).

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Ilemela and Misungwi districts, Mwanza region. Mwanza region was randomly selected as the study area because it possessed the characteristic features relegated to contextual background of possessing urban, semi-urban and rural nature that were common to all other regions in Tanzania (David *et al.*, 2023).



On the other hand, Ilemela and Misungwi districts were stratified and randomly selected based on the nature of their environmental settings such that the findings served as suitable representative of both urban and rural context respectively (ibid). The study assumed that, the adoption of instructional leadership practices in the management of public primary schools was influenced by the nature of environmental contexts in which the school exists (Sultan *et al.*, 2022). Hence, the findings from a study that covers both rural and urban environmental settings would likely be relatively free from contextual limitations of generalizability (Kamper, 2019). Ilemela district covers the local administrative authority under Ilemela Municipal Council while Misungwi district is under Misungwi District Council. Currently, Ilemela district had 76 public primary schools with a total number of 1424 of teachers. On the other hand, Misungwi district had 142 public primary schools with a total number of 1570 teachers (URT, 2023).

3.3 Target Population

The population for this study included 2994 primary school teachers including Headteachers from all 218 public primary schools in Ilemela and Misungwi Districts, Ward Education Officers (WEOs) from all 46 wards in both districts, 2 District Pre and Primary Education Officers (DPPEOs) and 2 District School Quality Assurance Officers (DSQAOs) (URT, 2023). Headteachers constituted a necessary strategic group of respondents because they formed the core function of Instructional leadership practice within the school. On the other hand, teachers, being the key implementers of the school curriculum, provided valuable information regarding the instructional leadership practices that the headteacher operationalizes and their level of work morale. Similarly, the teachers formed a significant group of respondents regarding their roles and responsibilities in the school as teaching and learning process (URT, 2013). Furthermore, the WEOs, DSQAs and DPPEOs provided valuable information as the key informants to complement and justify what was provided by the primary respondents.

3.4 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

From a target population of 2,994 teachers, including head teachers from all 218 public primary schools in Ilemela and Misungwi districts, Yamane's formula, $n = N / [1 + N(e^2)]$, was used to calculate the sample size, where n = sample size, N = target population, and e = margin of error (0.05). Using the target population ($N = 2,994$) (URT, 2023), the sample size was calculated as $n = 2,994 / [1 + 2,994(0.05)^2]$, resulting in 352 respondents. This sample comprised 264 ordinary teachers selected through simple random sampling, 44 academic teachers, and 44 head teachers who were purposively sampled. In addition, the study included 8 Ward Education Officers (WEOs), 2 District Pre and Primary Education Officers (DPPEOs), and 2 District School Quality Assurance Officers (DSQAOs) as key informants, all purposively sampled. Since each school provided 8 respondents, the sample was drawn from 44 primary schools ($352 / 8$). To ensure effective representation, the 44 schools were proportionally distributed between the two districts at a rate of 0.20 ($44 / 218$) based on their respective sampling frames.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The research data were collected by using questionnaire adopted and modified from Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale by Hallinger and Wang (2015), interview and documentary review. The use of multiple methods was adopted in order to overcome the limitations inherent within one method by the strengths of the other (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Notably, triangulation in the data collection ensured validity and enabled the researcher to get the reality of what was investigated (ibid.).

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive statistics in terms of mean, standard deviation and skewness while, the qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis. Reliability of the data collection instruments was tested for internal consistency as determined by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability while validity was ensured through content validity, criterion validity and construct validity. Moreover, ethical issues were considered by observing protocol, informed consent of respondents and confidentiality of information sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Hurst, 2023).

3.4 Ethical Consideration

The planning, conducting and reporting of this research, involved considerations of ethical issues and principles as per set standard and practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Such principles included securing research permit from relevant authorities, informing the respondents in advance that their participation in the study was voluntary, and that the information they would give would be kept confidentially (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018).

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The results of the study outline the key findings on the instructional leadership practices of head teachers in terms of defining school mission, managing school instructional program, and promoting positive school climate.

4.1 Findings

This section presents data analysis results that were intended to answer the research question of the study “*To what extent do head teachers adopt instructional leadership practices in public primary schools in Tanzania?*” Noticeably, the aim was to determine the extent of respondents’ agreement with the observable indicators for the adoption of instructional leadership practices on the five-Likert scale starting from “1= strongly disagree” to “5= strongly agree”. The instructional leadership practices variable was measured by eleven observable indicators whose results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Results on the Level of Head teachers’ Instructional Leadership Practices in Primary Schools

Measured Indicators	Mean	SD	SK
Effective communication of school goals	4.11	1.092	-1.404
Supporting teachers on conducting SWOT analysis	4.09	1.107	-1.226
Supporting teachers on formulating well-focused school goals	4.11	1.151	-1.336
Supporting teachers in preparing schemes of work and lesson plans	4.59	.860	-2.649
Supporting teachers on adopting inclusive teaching and learning strategies	4.56	.834	-2.389
Encouraging teachers toward preparing and use inclusive teaching and learning aids	4.55	.810	-2.361
Encouraged to use instructional time efficiently for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts	4.59	.795	-2.452
Conducting classroom observation by head teacher during teaching on regular basis	4.24	1.138	-1.583
Feedback is given to teachers after classroom observation	4.28	1.120	-1.678
Supporting and giving opportunities to teachers to develop their professional skills	4.37	1.000	-1.946
Encouraging teachers to attend in-service trainings that align with school goals	4.38	1.008	-1.936
Overall Scores	4.35	0.992	-1.905

The results in Table 2 show that, the overall mean is ($M=4.35$) which is relatively closer to the maximum value (5) signifying that on average, teachers agree or strongly agree with the head teachers’ proper adoption of instructional leadership practices from the given observable indicators. This suggests that the majority of respondents rated head teacher’s instructional leadership practices very positively with respect to practices such as supporting teachers to: formulate and communicate well-focused school goals; prepare scheme and lesson plans; conducting situational analysis basing on identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT); adopt inclusive teaching and learning strategies. Other practices that were rated very positively include head teacher’s supporting teachers to prepare and use inclusive teaching and learning aids; use instructional time efficiently for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts; provide feedback after classroom observation; and attend in-service trainings that align with school goals. Such high mean score reflects a generally impressive evaluation of head teacher’s instructional leadership practices and implies that most of the respondents feel confident and satisfied with the head teacher’s instructional abilities.

Also, the average skewness value of ($SK= -1.905$) indicates that, most of the respondents had their responses distributed on the right side of the mean. These results show that, respondents rated positively the elements of head teacher’s instructional leadership practices to the agree or strongly agree on the likert scale. The high ratings strongly suggest that head teachers demonstrate a proper adoption of instructional leadership practices.

The results also show that the overall standard deviation among the responses was found to be ($SD=0.992$). This suggests that most of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that head teachers demonstrate high adoption of instructional leadership practices and at the same time there were some variability of responses among the assessed indicators. On the other hand, a relatively moderate value of standard deviation ($SD=0.992$) indicates moderate inconsistency or variability of the responses implying that, despite a generally higher levels of adoption of instructional leadership practices, there are noticeable differences among individuals, with some of them rating head teacher’s adoption of instructional leadership practices much lower than the group average. The observed higher level of instructional leadership practices suggests that, head teachers play a significant role in defining a school focused goals, managing instructional program and in developing a positive school climate, which in turn positively influence teachers teaching and pupils learning outcomes. However, the moderate variability ($SD = 0.992$) and presence of a few lower scores of assessed indicators indicate that, not all respondents feel equally satisfied with head teachers’ proper adoption of instructional leadership practices, which highlights the need for targeted interventions or support strategies



to address the concerns of head teachers who may be experiencing lower level of adoption of instructional leadership practices. Overall, the findings reveal a strong foundation of head teacher's proper adoption of instructional leadership practices with a room for improvement to ensure consistency across all the head teachers.

Although the overall results revealed a high level of adoption of instructional leadership practices by the head teachers ($M = 4.35$), further examination of the data indicated notable extreme cases that enrich deeper insights on the head teacher's instructional leadership practices. For example, the respondents recorded an exceptionally higher mean score ($M = 4.59$) than the aggregate mean ($M = 4.35$) on head teacher's role of supporting teachers in preparing schemes of work and lesson plans and encouraging teachers to use instructional time efficiently for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts, suggesting that, majority of teachers feel empowered and motivated when they are supported in assuming their instructional roles. On the other hand, head teachers scored a mean as lower as ($M = 4.09$), ($M = 4.11$) and ($M = 4.11$) than the aggregate mean ($M = 4.35$) on head teacher's instructional role of supporting teachers to conduct situational analysis, formulating well-focused school goals and communicating school goals respectively, suggesting that, despite their responsibilities in practicing instructional roles, some head teachers do not adequately assume their instructional roles.

The qualitative data from interviews on how head teacher adopts instructional leadership practices was analyzed thematically, as shown in Table 2, and presented as narratives and verbatim, providing valuable insights into the quantitative data.

Table 2

Head Teacher's Adoption of Instructional Leadership Practices in Schools

S/N	Category	Themes	Theme-Explanations
1.	Head teacher's instructional leadership practices	Proper adoption of instructional leadership practices	Involve teachers to formulate school goals Head teachers discuss school progress with teachers Head teachers provides support in protecting instructional time Head teachers supervise the implementation of curriculum Head teachers involve teachers in making decisions on matters relating to school operations Head teachers provide teaching resources to teachers such as curriculum, pens, chalks, lesson preparation materials
		Government intervention in enhancing instructional leadership practices	Improved leadership practices through regular training of head teachers Provision of delayed promotions to those who for long time had their promotions delayed Active involvement of teachers in school operational activities such as decision making
		unplanned meetings	Give head teachers less attention to instructional practices Local government authorities have to prioritise instructional practices
		supervision of construction projects	This gives head teachers less attention to instructional practices. Authority should recruit qualified personnel for construction work supervision The local administration authority should streamline administrative tasks to qualified personnel.
		financial management and accounting and procurement practices	The local administration authority should streamline administrative tasks to qualified personnel. Authority to recruit qualified personnel for overseeing procurement practices Authority to advocate stress management workshops
		inadequate skills in creating school vision and mission, classroom observation and feedback giving skills to teachers	The local government need to organize Capacity building to head teachers on instructional practices particularly in formulating and communication school vision and mission, effective classroom observation skills and feedback giving practices

The qualitative data from interview provided valuable insights on the instructional leadership practices adopted by head teachers that align with the quantitative results. The respondents articulated that most of the head teachers demonstrate instructional leadership practices in their day-to-day operational practices. In response to the matter at hand, one of the respondents reported that:

".....the majority of head teachers hold staff meetings with teachers to put in place school goals and discuss school progress and make decisions together. They encourage teachers to teach their lessons as



per time table..... administrative roles like ad hock meetings and supervision of construction of school buildings hinder full adoption of instructional practices,”(Interview: WEO, June 2025).

The quote indicates that, head teachers demonstrate high adoption level of instructional leadership practices, largely through active involvement of teachers in framing school goals, making informed decisions, as well as protecting instructional time. Nonetheless, persistent issues such as unplanned meetings, administrative duties such as supervision of construction projects undermine head teachers’ full adoption of instructional leadership practices indicating that, although the overall instructional leadership practices is high, targeted measures are needed to address specific challenges affecting some few head teachers. Arguing in the similar context, another respondent commented that:

“.....Nowadays, head teachers are trying their best to perform their leadership roles instructionally. They provide teaching resources to teachers; they lay down school goals with teachers, they supervise teaching and learning process and they monitor and evaluate teaching and learning process..... challenges remain in areas like creating school vision, mission and observe teachers teaching, feedback giving. Many schools do not have vision and mission statements.....” (Interview: DPPEO, June 2025).

A similar observation was made by another respondent who commented that:

“.....Our school visits have revealed head teachers encourage teachers to take part in continuous professional development sessions to improve their teaching skills. They motivate teachers and pupils for their good performance. To a large extent, the leadership training has improved their performance. However, they are overburdened by many administrative tasks such as frequent movements in various offices for preparing and signing payment documents.....” (Interview: DSQAO, June 2025).

The quote highlights a significant gradual positive change in head teacher’s leadership practices compared to earlier times. The quality assurance visit revealed a notable improvement in teachers’ involvement in various school leadership functions including decision-making, promoting teamwork, encouraging professional development, and improving working relationships. This indicates head teacher’s demonstration of instructional leadership practices in fostering a positive school climate, enhancing teacher motivation, and morale, and building a sense of ownership and commitment of teachers. Furthermore, this indicates growth in leadership practices where the focus is on empowering teachers, strengthening professional relationships and working collectively towards school improvement.

A comprehensive analysis of the quotes given by DPPEO and DSQAO are supported by the results obtained through documentary review. Through observing school documents, it was found that as leaders, head teachers perform their instructional roles such as supervising teaching and learning process, making sure that teachers prepare schemes and lesson plans before actual teaching in classroom as well as providing teaching materials to teachers needed for effective teaching and learning. This has been evidenced from documents such as issuing voucher of teaching materials the schools, schemes of works and lesson plans files, and monitoring and evaluation tool. It was further observed that most of the schools had no school vision and mission. They only had school motto and goals that were articulated in the Whole School Development Plans (WSDP). While stressing the issue of vision, mission and goals, the respondent added that:

“..... of course, some schools do not have vision and mission statements. Some of school which have vision and mission statements are not properly stated and are found in the WSDP document together with school goals. They are not posted on the notice board.....” (Interview: DSQAO, June 2025).

In view of this quote, it is evident that although the school goals are articulated in the schools, but they are not communicated to all stakeholders, hence limiting them to anticipate where the schools aim to be. Despite the noted high adoption of leadership practices, the quote also identifies existing challenges of excessive administrative tasks facing the headteachers such as supervising construction, attending frequent meetings outside their schools and frequent movements in various offices for preparing and signing payment documents which constrain instructional leadership practices for specific groups of head teachers.

The quotes from respondents emphasized head teachers being overburdened by excessive administrative duties namely that compromise full adoption of instructional leadership practices, hence suggesting immediate action to address head teachers’ concerns in order to heighten instructional leadership practices.

4.2 Discussion

This study examined the head teachers’ instructional leadership practices in Tanzanian Public Primary Schools in Mwanza region, yielding insights that address the research question and enrich educational literature. The results show that head teachers demonstrate a high adoption level of instructional leadership practices in public primary schools in Tanzania. This is because the overall computed mean, ($M=4.35$, equivalent to 87%) of the measured variables in the 5-point Likert scale was found to be greater than the normal average of 3 of the scale. Moreover, qualitative evidence from documentary review show high adoption of instructional practices by head teacher’s supporting teachers in preparing schemes of work and lesson plans and encouraging them to use instructional time



efficiently for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts. This finding is in line with the study findings of Kaisara (2024) in Botswana's Public Technical and Vocational Education and Training, in Botswana, which revealed that head teachers have a general understanding of instructional leadership practices with evidence of curriculum management and stakeholders involvement. This study finding matches with that of Shava *et al.* (2021) who found that principals play an instructional role in sustaining school learning improvement in South African schools.

Although the overall results revealed a high level of adoption of instructional leadership practices by the head teachers ($M = 4.35$), further examination of the data indicated notable extreme cases that enrich deeper insights on the head teacher's instructional leadership practices. For example, head teachers scoring a mean as lower as ($M=4.09$), ($M=4.11$) and ($M=4.11$) than the aggregate mean ($M= 4.35$) on their role in supporting teachers to conduct situational analysis, formulating well-focused school goals and communicating school goals respectively, suggest that, despite their responsibilities in practicing instructional roles, some head teachers do not adequately assume their instructional roles. This implies that, while instructional leadership practices require head teachers to provide full support to teachers in enhancing effective teaching and learning process, instructional skill gaps and structural-related issues still undermine head teachers' full adoption of instructional leadership practices.

The qualitative findings highlighted that structural-related issues impeding full adoption of instructional leadership roles are associated with head teachers shouldering heavy workloads such as attending ad hoc meetings, as well as supervising school construction projects, managing school procurement and financial management tasks which they were not trained in. This added responsibility often diverts time, attention, and energy away from core instructional duties such as classroom observations, teacher support, curriculum implementation, and student learning oversight (Ralebese *et al.*, 2025). The lack of expertise in construction is prone to stress, poor decision-making, and increased dependency on contractors, further reducing the head teacher's effectiveness in instructional matters. This finding is supported by Issa and Mhagama (2022) whose study on effectiveness of school heads in supervising school resources in Shinyanga District-Tanzania revealed that most of the school heads do not conduct effective supervision of school resources due to lack of supervision skills. Additionally, these findings match the study conducted by Nyambo (2017) in Chemba, Dodoma who confirmed that head teachers do not conduct instruction supervision properly because they are overloaded by administrative tasks. Basing on this finding, attention is drawn to the government to address this concern otherwise, the head's instructional leadership is likely to suffer, potentially leading to diminished teacher morale and reduced focus on teaching and learning outcomes (Aureada, 2021; Park & Choi, 2025).

As such, the highlighted unscheduled meetings are epitomized by disruption of planned instructional activities such as classroom observations, teacher mentoring, and curriculum monitoring, thereby reducing the head teacher's direct engagement with teaching and learning processes (Gyamerah, 2021; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Recent studies show that school heads' instructional leadership practices are significantly affected by unplanned or reactive demands, which function much like ad hoc meetings and interruptions. This observation is echoed by Midha (2023), who confirmed that unplanned meetings repeatedly force head teachers to divert attention away from strategic instructional tasks, reducing consistency in leadership and fading their ability to sustain classroom observation, feedback, or curriculum monitoring. Similarly, the finding is supported by Dongo and Mahlangu (2022) whose study in South Africa confirmed that frequent disruptions of unplanned activities undermine the flow of teaching and learning. Likewise, a study conducted by He *et al.* (2024) in Nigeria, revealed that when principals are less able to devote time to planned instructional leadership due to exigencies, teacher professional growth suffers. Contemporary evidence suggests that ad hoc meetings and reactive demands can erode the quality and consistency of instructional leadership by head teachers, reducing their ability to engage in strategic, sustained work with teachers and instruction. To balance the competing demands of instructional leadership and school management, it is crucial for head teachers to establish boundaries around their time, delegate operational tasks where possible, and prioritize scheduled instructional leadership practices to maintain their focus on teaching and learning outcomes.

Notably, financial management and accounting and procurement practices have been highlighted as other administrative roles that occupy another big portion of head teacher's instructional supervisory time. It was highlighted that all primary schools do not have qualified personnel to assume financial and procurement roles. Such responsibilities are performed by the head teachers, who principally lack necessary accounting and procurement competences to regularly carry out procurement risks management; ensure procurement rules are followed, carry out procurement contract management; allocating funds for various school functions; and prepare payment documents for procured goods and services (Edmund & Lyamtane, 2018; Kosgei & Lekheto, 2024). Head teachers therefore, spend much of their time struggling to adhere to rules and regulations governing financial accounting and procurement practices, suggesting a negative impact on their ability to effectively supervise instructional practices as affirmed by Edmund and Lyamtane (2018); Wadasen (2024). Notably, it was also brought to the researcher attention that head teachers are on roads each month travelling from office to office searching for approval of payment for school procured goods and services. This extra responsibility often diverts time, attention, and energy away from core

instructional duties such as classroom observations, teacher support, curriculum implementation, and student learning oversight (Ralebese *et al.*, 2025). This requires a targeted attention address the situation by hiring qualified personnel to relieve head teachers' administrative roles. Notably, the need for training, mentoring and coaching to head teachers is crucial to improve their procurement competences, hence giving more time and attention on instructional practices.

While the quantitative results show head teacher's high adoption of instructional leadership practices, the qualitative findings show moderate adoption of instructional leadership practices due to administrative burdens. Integration of mixed-methods contributed immensely to generating robust and comprehensive knowledge on headteachers' adoption of instructional leadership practices than either approach could do alone. However, both, quantitative and qualitative findings revealed that head teaches have shown to demonstrate good adoption of instructional leadership practices. Notably, excessive workload related to administrative duties has shown to be a threat towards head teachers' full engagement in enhancing instructional leadership practices. It is therefore advised that, the policy makers and educational practitioners to balance workforce tasks as a means to give room to the head teachers to fully assume instructional leadership practices efficiently. Furthermore, capacity building to head teachers on instructional leadership is required to bridge instructional practice gaps and maintain their focus on teaching and learning outcomes.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

With regard to the study objectives, the study findings revealed that, respondents rated their extent of their agreement with head teachers' defining school mission practices by (M=4.11); managing instructional program practices by (M=4.45); and creating positive learning climate practices by (M=4.39). It was therefore concluded that, head teachers demonstrate good practices in defining school mission, managing instructional program and creating positive school learning climate which in turn contribute enormously to good adoption of instructional leadership practices. Moreover, it was also concluded that, much administrative responsibilities such as ad hock meetings and supervising constructional projects inhibit head teachers' full involvement with instructional leadership practices.

5.2 Recommendations

In response to the study findings, the study recommends the government to review head teachers' terms of services as a strategic mechanism to offload them with administrative duties such as construction supervision and provide classroom observation and defining school mission training to head teachers to heighten instructional leadership practices. The policy makers should make a deliberate effort in designing a capacity building training to head teachers to enhance their instructional skills so that they fully realize effective teaching and learning practices.

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